Three Phases of Kim Roosevelt *Benjamin Welles*

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Sharing Secrets

Congress' CIA Cover-Up
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Ford's First Year—*John Osborne*
Threatening Suicide—*TRB*
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TRB

from Washington
July 26, 1975

Threatening Suicide

At 10 minutes to eight on the first morning of this month Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger met some 20 reporters at breakfast and continued what can only be considered an organized maneuver by President Ford and his administration to make the idea of nuclear war thinkable.

Recent developments permit no other conclusion. The drive has brought attack from Democrats, anger from Moscow and shock from the public, but President Ford and Secretary Schlesinger have not retreated: they insist that it is not a new policy, just a reaffirmation of an old one of Jack Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon. But the emphasis and timing are new. They are reaffirming America's option to use tactical nukes in a minor crisis and even to make a selective strike at the USSR.

Why are they doing it? They are doing it, it would appear, to reassert the doctrine of credibility, a doctrine that has almost theological overtones in the apocalyptic dogma of nuclear confrontation. It must not only be known that America has A-weapons but will use them. In a game where first-strike use is almost equivalent to suicide the world must know that we are willing to commit suicide. It is the horrible logic of modern man's nuclear dilemma.

In the Old West a tough man knew that carrying a gun was no good if the people didn't think you would use it; the same thing goes now for nations with nukes. The Ford administration seems to have decided it is time for the public to understand this. It is nonsense to say that it is just Schlesinger throwing his weight around. He wouldn't do it without the President's approval, though Moscow, for diplomatic reasons, assumes the contrary. Richard Nixon did the same thing. We mustn't show ourselves to be a pitiful, helpless giant. There's nothing like a bit of brutality to prove our determination—Cambodia, Laos, the Christmas bombing of North Vietnam—they all were part of the credibility credo. And Mr. Ford, too; he responded in much the same way in the *Mayaguez* incident.

There is another aspect to the affair. Proliferation has gotten out of hand. It is not really likely anymore that it can be stopped. Nation after nation joins the club, or soon will join: the super powers, China, France, India, probably Israel, before long Brazil. If you can't stand the facts of life you can look the other way. According to some doomsayers, with 10 kilograms of plutonium (22 pounds), a high school science lab and the services of a technically literate designer, most nations could produce bombs.

"You haven't said whether you will use the first strike?" a reporter asked Mr. Ford at the South Lawn press conference, June 26. He wouldn't answer. "Does the US still disavow first use of nuclear weapons?" He wouldn't answer. Question No. 14: "If North Korea attacks South Korea would you use nuclear weapons to stop it?" No answer. Follow-up question, "You're flatly not ruling it out though?" Answer: "I'm not either confirming it or denying it. I'm saying we have the forces and they'll be used in our national interest as they should be."

Schlesinger speaks and the President nods his head. Well before his breakfast with us Schlesinger submitted to Congress, in May, an unpublished report on "The Theater Nuclear Defense Posture in Europe," later described as declaring that a conventional Soviet-led attack against Europe might force the US to use battlefield nuclear weapons to avoid defeat. Schlesinger told *US News* May 26 that in case of attack by North Korea "it is necessary to go for the heart of the opponent's power; destroy his military forces . . . more vigorous action . . . than the Vietnamese war."

That kind of tough talk only means one thing. *Pravda* denounced him June 1. So what? On ABC's "Issues and Answers," July 6, he said that nuclear weapons would only be employed under "desperate" circumstances. But he didn't deny that they would be employed.

Schlesinger is a personable figure with a quick, subtle mind. At breakfast he was far from committing an indiscretion. He came with a tape recorder, had a sheaf of statements by earlier defense secretaries to show policy hadn't changed; spoke on the record and paused weightily before answering questions. Then with a flushed face and a comma after each qualification he replied, "First use could conceivably (let me underscore 'conceivably') involve what we define as strategic forces and possible, possibly (underscore 'possibly') involve a selective strike at the Soviet Union. We do not necessarily exclude that, but it is indeed a very, very low probability."

That made *Pravda* explode again July 12. Nearly every reporter at the breakfast wrote a piece about it not emphasizing a change of policy, but a change of emphasis and tone.

In a 1957 book *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, Harvard Professor Henry Kissinger expounded mankind's dilemma: "The refusal to run any risks would amount to giving the Soviets a blank check," he said, adding that "the more powerful the weapons . . . the greater becomes the reluctance to use them." That's why John Foster Dulles invented brinksmanship—rushing to the abyss to outstare your opponent. Kissinger recognized in 1957 the paralyzing fear of weapons: he proposed overcoming it by educating the public and by a "diplomacy which seeks to break down the atmosphere of special horror which now surrounds the use of nuclear weapons."

That's what's happening now—we are being educated. In Vietnam, Nixon tried "limited war" without nukes and it didn't work. Worse still, thought nuclear theologians, it weakened America's crucial credibility. Nixon hung on in Vietnam, less to win the war at the end than to demonstrate America's will. It is a maddening dilemma; no previous nation ever faced it. Kissinger at Harvard urged "a public opinion which has been educated to the realities of the nuclear age." We are the first generation that can destroy itself, the first in which Man is the endangered species.

The nuclear nonproliferation treaty is a worthy instrument, but various nations won't sign it and it is hard to believe that it is going to prevent the multiplication of warheads. Argentina, Chile, Taiwan, Pakistan, Iran, South Africa, West Germany are either seeking to acquire plutonium separation plants or are tempted to use the resources they already have. A byproduct of a nuclear energy plant may be wastes to make bombs.

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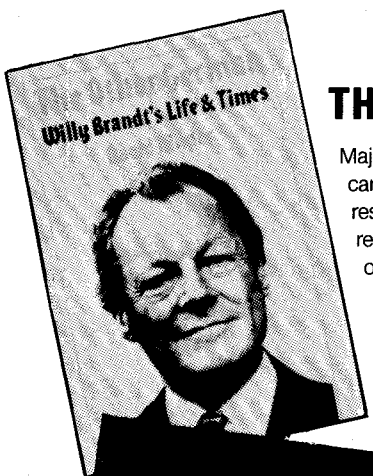

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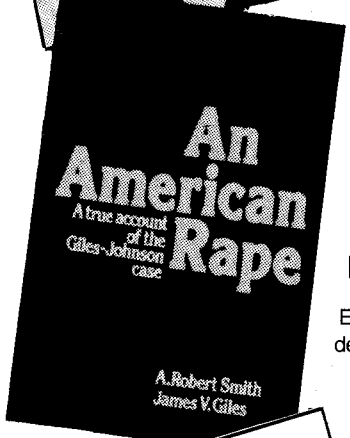

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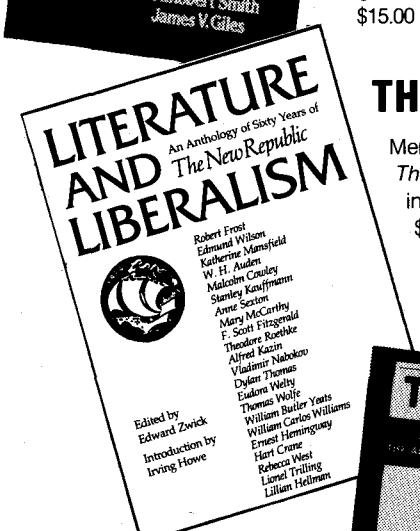

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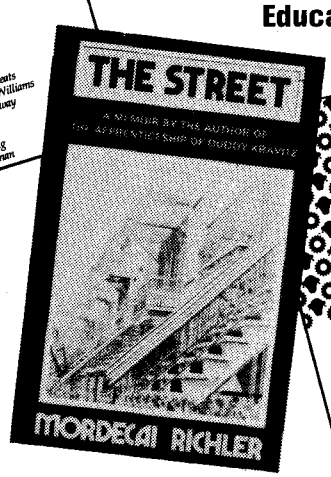

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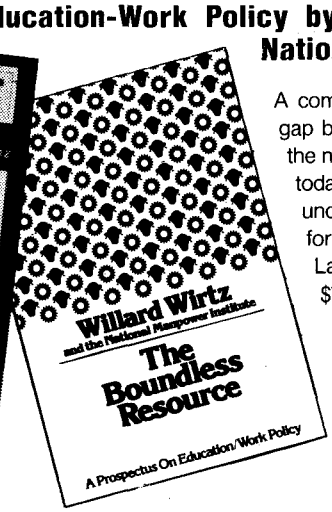

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No Time to Say Hello, Goodbye

Among the people Alexander Solzhenitsyn did not meet on his first visit to Washington this month was President Ford. Various reasons were offered for this omission, two of them by White House spokesmen and the other by reporters and commentators interpreting the offered reasons and purporting to quote anonymous "White House aides." The officially offered reasons were that the President didn't have time to see Solzhenitsyn and (by implication, consistent with Henry Kissinger's known aversion to avoidable interference with his policies and endeavors) that the Secretary of State had advised the President that receiving the exiled author would damage détente by offending the sensibilities of Soviet rulers. Anonymous Ford aides were said to have raised the question of Solzhenitsyn's "mental stability" and also to have suggested that Ford by meeting him would be helping to promote his latest book. The President's failure to attend AFL-CIO President George Meany's dinner for Solzhenitsyn was officially excused with the explanation that the dinner was held on the night of a family evening with Ford's daughter, Susan, who was home for a visit.

The wealth of excuses quickly became an embarrassment of riches. Perhaps the most embarrassing was the reference to mental instability. No one could fail to draw the sinister parallel between this charge and the identical one used so notoriously by the KBG to discredit (and then lock up) "enemies of the State." The absurdity of the next suggestion, that such a meeting might be viewed as promotion of a "commercial venture" (A book of essays on the fate of Russia, which Solzhenitsyn and other writers still there managed to smuggle out of the Soviet Union) was made obvious by two other meetings that *did* take place. The President gladly met with soccer star Pelé (here to promote the game that nets him millions of dollars), and he met with a textile-touting Cotton Queen. As for the final excuse of parental duty, Susan Ford was expected to stay at home at least a week; her father had time to spend an evening or two with her.

Within a few days someone in the White House heeded the wisdom of that line from Griboedov that has assumed proverbial force in the Russian language: "*Vri, da znaj zhe meru*" (Lie if you must, but know when to stop) and all "reasons" but the first disappeared. We were left with one big excuse instead of a string of little ones: the President and

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his advisers did not wish to jeopardize "detente." (Kissinger acknowledged July 16 that indeed he had advised Ford not to see Solzhenitsyn.) What was finally said, in an excess of absurdity and bumbling, was that the President would have said if he had been asked about it at his Chicago press conference on July 12 that he would be glad to receive Mr. Solzhenitsyn at the White House if Mr. Solzhenitsyn asked to be received. He hadn't asked and, at this writing, has not sought an audience.

"Detente" is a curious word. It brings to mind those soft-drink advertisements that line the Paris metro: a happy band of young people are seated around a gleaming chrome table, mouths wide in grins, hands clasping glasses of a celebrated American cola: *Pour la detente* (relaxation, refreshment) reads the legend underneath. And who should now appear at the party but the uninvited guest, the voice from the camps, speaking of quite different matters (for someone must speak of them):

"On our small planet there are no longer any internal affairs. Communist leaders say 'Don't interfere with our internal affairs, let us strangle our own citizens quietly.' But I tell you : Interfere. Interfere as much as you like." Whatever "detente" may mean, it does not mean, or should not mean, that we must turn our backs on decency. We do need some kind of "detente," some cooperation, some understanding that will prevent America and Russia from blowing each other up, but if political (and economic) considerations are to make us sporadic bedfellows of the Soviets, it is essential that we assert our beliefs loudly and unmistakably.

Solzhenitsyn told his Washington audience: [Detente is]"not based on smiles, nor on verbal concessions. It has to be based on a firm foundation . . . The communist leaders respect only firmness and laugh at those who continually give in to them. Your people are now saying, 'Power, without any attempt at conciliation, will lead to a world conflict.' But I would say that power with continual subservience is no power at all." Solzhenitsyn's are not exactly our views: the road away from big power conflict is an imperative. But detente should never be allowed to render us indifferent to the cruelties of the world, whether they are inflicted by our own government or by others.

A century ago the poet Nekrasov observed: "Russia is obsessed with America." To an extent most Americans hardly dream of, we still obsess her. What we do or say will be known inside Russia sooner or later. A meeting between Gerald Ford and Alexander Isayevitch Solzhenitsyn would have been the most convincing of semaphores signaling to the Russians that we have not forgotten all that has happened to this man (and to millions of others)—his years in Soviet slave labor camps, his defiance of Soviet authorities after his release from those camps, and his determination to inform the world of what he has witnessed and endured.

White House Watch

Ford's First Year

At a press conference in Chicago on July 12, Gerald Ford was asked what he considers to be his "biggest personal accomplishments and failings as President" now that he is approaching the end of his first year in the office and is a declared candidate for nomination and election in 1976. His answer indicated some interesting priorities, provided a fair preview of the first-year inventory that the White House staff is preparing for publication on or near the anniversary of his accession on August 9, and capsuled the arguments that he will be using to persuade the Republican national convention to nominate him and the voters to elect him next year.

Mr. Ford's first emphasis was upon himself and what he thinks he has done for the presidency. As he put it, saying "we" but meaning "I": ". . . we have restored public confidence in the White House and in the executive branch of the government." His other points, in the order he stated them: the annual rate of inflation has been halved from between 12 and 14 percent to "roughly six percent"; unemployment stays up but it's going to decline and (he implied) the recession is ending; his energy program, now in revision and still to be enacted, should make the country "energy self-sufficient and less vulnerable to foreign oil imports"; and, last in this statement but certainly not least in the claims to come, "considerable progress" in foreign affairs as well as in domestic policy and performance. Here, without attempting detailed review of the record, are a few judgments of that record and of the President's claims.

The general perception of Gerald Ford near the end of his year is demonstrably close to his perception of himself. Recent and successive polls give him growing leads over all other prospective candidates for the presidency in both parties and particularly over the Democrat who has been presumed to be that party's strongest figure, Senator Edward Kennedy. Reporters and columnists who have talked to Mr. Ford lately, individually and in small groups, come away with impressions of "a confident President," sure of himself in ways and to an extent he didn't seem to be during his first months in the office. My impression, based only upon his public appearances in recent months along with a good deal of talk with some of his associates, pretty well coincides with a view expressed the other day by Bryce Harlow, a Washington lobbyist who worked for Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon at the White House and is one of President Ford's cronies and unofficial advisers. "That office," Harlow said, "either flattens the man in it or makes him stand tall. It hasn't flattened Jerry Ford." In an odd way the suggestion that the presidency has changed Gerald Ford for the better

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offends some of his associates. After Vice President Rockefeller was quoted here as saying the media ought to pay more attention than had been paid to President Ford's remarkable growth during the months that Rockefeller had been his Vice President, a senior Ford assistant and long-time friend grumped that this was nonsense. It wasn't that the President had changed, counselor Robert Hartmann said, he was the same old Ford. It was simply that Rockefeller had come to know him and see him close-up for the first time.

The press in mid-July was more preoccupied with what seemed to be evidence that the President was deliberately disassociating himself from his Vice President than it was with Mr. Ford's alleged personality growth. Howard (Bo) Callaway, the President's preconvention campaign chairman, said in so many words that he was seeking delegates for Mr. Ford, not for Nelson Rockefeller, and excluding Rockefeller from the Ford campaign because to do otherwise would alienate Republican conservatives who detest the Vice President. The President, who's been saying for months that he wants and expects the Vice President to be on the 1976 ticket, spoke in Chicago of "the Vice President seeking his delegates and I seeking mine." It was an inept remark, not because it indicated a real schism between the President and the Vice President (there isn't any) but because Rockefeller had just said in Atlanta that he wasn't running for anything. Mr. Ford in fact was at last doing what Rockefeller had been advising him to do since February, which was to follow custom and avoid commitment to a candidate for the vice presidency until the candidate for the presidency is nominated.

The President is correct in his claim that the inflation rate has been halved since he took office. His accompanying admission that it's down partly as a result of sustained high rates of unemployment is rare in national politics. "As you bring down inflation," he said on June 25, "we may have to suffer for a short period of time higher unemployment than we like." The policy that the remark reflected is repugnant, but the admission is courageous and therefore admirable. In my judgment several of Mr. Ford's attitudes are far from admirable. During a recent trip to Ohio, a trip acknowledged to be political in purpose, he spoke repeatedly and rather defensively of his dual obligation "to preserve what is best in our environment" and simultaneously to "pursue the objective of maximum jobs and continued economic progress." This rationale as the President applies it keeps bringing him down against environmental protections and on the side of business management and profits at the expense of social needs. His two vetoes of strong bills to control strip mining and his recommendation that Congress repeal the current requirement that the automobile industry substantially strengthen emission standards are examples. His most recent pitch for what he calls "regulatory reform" suggests a repellent willingness to place millions of Americans at the mercy of market forces that have never been and are not now the agents of benevolence that the President implies and seemingly believes them to be. Mr. Ford's reference on July 3 to "the mistaken, stupid idea that regulation protects people" is appalling in its indiscriminate sweep and its misreading of history and our society. Some regulation is mistaken and excessive, no doubt, but I suspect that the biggest flaw and deception in the whole Ford approach lies hidden in his vague generalities about "regulatory reform." Two of his recent remarks on the subject are straight lifts from Richard Nixon, a fact that in itself does not invalidate the points but does put Mr. Ford's continuing effort to disassociate himself and his administration from his predecessor and the Nixon administration in perspective. The remarks were: "And don't forget that a government big enough to give you everything you want is a government big enough to take from you everything you have"; and: "Declaring our independence from too much government does not mean sounding a retreat from the legitimate responsibilities which government must and ought to assume."

Gerald Ford as manager—and Presidents are rightly expected either to be or find good managers—leaves a lot to be desired. His reconstituted cabinet is an improvement over the one he inherited. But his immediate establishment, the White House Office staff and the larger Executive Office operation more or less supervised by staff chief Donald Rumsfeld, is looser, sloppier, occasionally less competent than Rumsfeld's initial declaration of intent to assure an "orderly decision process" for the President led this observer to expect. An interesting explanation of why these defects could exist was offered after a recent example—a silly and avoidable brush between Press Secretary Ron Nessen and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger—was reported here in somewhat acidulous detail. The explanation was that Rumsfeld's declared dedication to orderly process had been misread. He hadn't meant that the operation was to be orderly in the totally controlled sense that H.R. Haldeman and then Gen. Alexander Haig meant and required. President Ford demanded much wider access to his senior assistants than Richard Nixon had wanted or tolerated. In keeping with this attitude Rumsfeld deliberately held a looser rein and, though he wouldn't put it exactly this way, permitted a freedom to make mistakes that would have been considered subversive in the Nixon White House. It's been an exercised freedom, God and presumably Gerald Ford know. Witness the recent foul ups of the Solzhenitsyn affair, release of the Rockefeller CIA report, and the President's revised proposal to decontrol domestic oil prices.

John Osborne

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Serving Oil, Arabs And the CIA

Somewhere in the files of the Iranian border police lies an entry card made out for Mr. "Scar On The Right Forehead." There is no corresponding exit card and this may—or may not—have puzzled the Iranian authorities through the years. The truth can now be told.

A semiliterate border patrolman, seeing a rare traveler driving himself from Baghdad to Tehran on a hot August day in 1953, copied the wrong line from the visitor's US passport. Had he read a line or so higher he would have had the name right: Kermit Roosevelt.

Roosevelt, then head of the CIA's Middle East division, was unobtrusively on his way to carry out a secret mission for President Eisenhower, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his brother, CIA Director Allen Dulles—and, incidentally, for Winston Churchill, then British prime minister. The mission, in brief, was to oust the aging, crafty and paranoid Iranian Premier Mossadegh and restore power to the young Shah whose wings had been effectively clipped.

Mossadegh's open flirting with Moscow and his chaotic rule were sending shivers down the backs not only of the US and Britain but, even more, of their powerful allies the oil "majors." So the coup was carried off—not without tense moments—and four days later "Kim" Roosevelt, en route home, stopped in London to recount his tale to Churchill, who was in bed recovering from an illness. The old lion, puffing his cigar, sipping his brandy, heard every detail. "In so splendidly conceived and executed a mission," he finally rumbled, "it would, indeed, have been an honor to have served under your command."

High praise for the then 38-year-old academician-turned-spy. The Iranian coup, which appears to have kept the Shah and his oil from Soviet domination, has gone into the annals of the CIA as a classic of its kind. Eisenhower awarded Roosevelt the ultrasecret National Security Medal and, ever since, Roosevelt's prestige as a Middle East expert has been high in that cozy-crony world of the White House, State, Defense, CIA—and the oil and arms industries.

In fact since retiring from the CIA 15 years ago, Kim Roosevelt has opened closed doors and provided useful advice for such well-paying clients—apart from the Iranian government—as Gulf, Raytheon, Tenneco and Northrop.

It is because of Northrop's current publicity that Roosevelt finds himself momentarily embarrassed. He may, in fact, be called before the Senate to testify. Not only has Northrop been found to have made illegal contributions to Nixon's 1972 reelection; 500 pages of documents recently released by the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on multinational "hocus-pocus" show that Northrop secretly passed $450,000 to two Saudi Arabian air force generals whose smiles or frowns would determine the fate of a sale involving 65 Northrop F-E5 jet fighters worth $700 million or more. The deal went through—but the odors are rising.

Roosevelt flatly denies any knowledge of—let alone participation in—the payoffs; and there are grounds for believing him. "I always stayed away from the payments side," he recently told a lifelong friend. His forte, in fact, was opening doors at the highest levels, ascertaining trends—such as where potential rivals like Lockheed might stand—persuading royal princes and high officials. Not for nothing is he "Kim" to the Shah and to various Saudi princelings.

Still, pages of his private letters to Northrop officials have been released and they reveal repeated references to "my friends in the CIA" who were keeping him posted about the moves of commercial rivals. Perhaps it was only shoptalk between old friends and former colleagues gathering at twilight for a beer—but maybe it was more. This unquestionably raises problems: ethical and otherwise. In simplest terms: should ex-CIA men receive inside tips for the profit of their employers, the stockholders and eventually themselves? It may be widely done, but does that make it proper?

There is no doubt that Roosevelt's inside track was of enormous value to Northrop. In the ringing prose of T.V. Jones, the Northrop president, unearthed by Senate investigators, Roosevelt was ". . . perhaps the key figure in . . . contract values in this [Middle East] area in the past seven to eight years running close to a billion dollars." Roosevelt, when asked, grins and remarks, "By God, he's probably right. . . ."

This is characteristic. Roosevelt is part supersleuth with a keen mind trained by years of intelligence work. He is also the bumbling professor, slightly rumpled, who mutters while pondering: "Goddamn . . . I can't remember names any more." The combination is engaging, and to many, baffling.

Now 59 and recovering fast from two successive open-heart operations, he and Polly, his wife, spend much of their time around the pool of their Washington home. Roosevelt gives the appearance of easygoing informality—oblivious to the noisy splashings of his business-partner sons, Kermit, Jr., and Jonathan; their wives, children and children's friends.

Yet there is a nervous energy below the surface. As a Groton schoolboy he was a star sprinter, and he still explodes now and then in a burst of laughter or a facial quirk reminiscent of his celebrated grandfather "TR."

"He's really not at all like my father in character," says Alice Roosevelt Longworth, TR's nonagenarian daughter and Kim's aunt. "My father was pushy . . . aggressive. Kim is quiet. He gets a lot of his character from his mother's family, the Willards. But mainly he's just himself."

Another friend, a longtime CIA associate, sees Roosevelt as a "loner. He has the rare quality," he says, "of knowing how to keep his mouth shut; he has

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immense patience and he has guts. I've known him to stand up to Secretaries of State—and win. It's that stubborn Dutch strain."

It is not just the fact of his name; though that opens doors all over the world. Roosevelt himself is a student of Middle East affairs and a champion of the Palestinians, whose rights, he maintains, were ignored when Palestine was created. As early as 1946 his first published article about the Holy Land—"The Arabs Live There, Too"—appeared in *Harper's* and won him wide attention, not least among such pro-Arabs as the State Department and the major oil companies. The Middle East has dominated his life ever since.

After graduating from Harvard in 1937 Roosevelt briefly taught history at Harvard and Cal Tech. In 1940, while passing through Washington, he showed Joseph Alsop, his cousin, a draft article urging a propaganda and intelligence agency for the US, which then had none. Days later he had a call from Col. "Wild Bill" Donovan, wartime chief of the OSS. "Forget the article: come work for me." So began a career in which intelligence work, big business and the Middle East have intertwined like triple strands of the same cord.

Within months of Donovan's call—except for a brief stint as a special assistant to Dean Acheson at the State Department—Roosevelt found himself in uniform in Cairo collecting intelligence on the Middle East. In time, as the fortunes of war shifted, he moved to Italy. A serious jeep accident soon after V-E Day forced his return to the States and it was while convalescing in Walter Reed that he began serious writing. He edited the OSS' two-volume war history, all 50 bound copies of which remain, after 29 years, sealed in Pentagon vaults. Neither he—nor Donovan, incidentally—ever received a copy.

This experience was to reveal his indifference to rank. When Donovan refused initially to write a foreword because he felt some passages had not sufficiently reflected his own wartime leadership, Roosevelt coolly replied that in such case he himself would write a foreword exposing Donovan's reasons for refusing. Donovan signed.

On leaving Walter Reed, Roosevelt began traveling throughout the Middle East writing for *The Saturday Evening Post*. Increasingly certain that the impending creation of Israel would detonate profound upheavals in the area he also, between trips, helped in organizing such pro-Arab groups as the Committee for Peace and Justice in the Holy Land, which he chaired with Dean Virginia Gildersleeve of Barnard and which included the anti-Zionist Protestant "establishment."

In time he also became active in two organizations largely financed by "big oil" funds: the American Friends of the Middle East and the Middle East Institute. Both are viewed in pro-Israeli eyes as centers of pro-Arab, anti-Israel propaganda.

With the outbreak of the Korean war in June 1950, he rejoined the old team, now known as the CIA. For the next eight years he helped mold, and largely dominate, the CIA's Mideastern policies. Roosevelt's intimacy with the then director, Allen Dulles, served him in good stead when various minions of Secretary of State Dulles had the occasional temerity to disagree with Roosevelt's views or oppose Roosevelt's operations, overtly or covertly. Kim Roosevelt's star was high in those heady, imperial years.

By 1958, with four children to educate on a bureaucrat's salary, Roosevelt said goodbye to government and slid into the lucrative corporate embrace of big business. He became a vice president of Gulf Oil in charge of government relations—*e.g.*, a top level advocate, door-opener, smoother of problems. In 1964 he founded Kermit Roosevelt Associates, Inc. He has stayed ever since in the realm of money, a business consultant to great corporations—petroleum, armaments, telecommunications, etc.—with substantial sales and interests in the Middle East.

Is he, as sometimes alleged, anti-Zionist? No, he says. "I have very good relations with Israelis. Eliahu Elath, the first Israeli ambassador, was a close friend. Teddy Kollek, mayor of Jerusalem, is a friend. When Rabin was ambassador here we lunched at least every two or three weeks."

It is interesting to note that Israel never formed part of Kim Roosevelt's Middle East division in the CIA; Israeli affairs were always jealously (and brilliantly) monopolized by James Angleton, until recently the secretive and occasionally awe-inspiring head of CIA's counterintelligence staff.

"Jim Angleton and I never quarreled," laughs Roosevelt, "though looking back there were periods when contact between the Middle East division and Angleton virtually didn't exist. We were friends—but also professional competitors."

They were also, on occasion, collaborators in the search for peace. In the summer of 1956 after Nasser's defiant nationalization of the Suez Canal, with Israeli-Egyptian tension mounting ominously, Eisenhower sent Robert B. Anderson, his intimate friend and later Secretary of the Treasury, on several secret peace missions to the rival leaders: Nasser and Ben Gurion. As escorts Eisenhower sent along Roosevelt and Angleton. Basing himself in Rome, Anderson would fly with Roosevelt to visit Nasser, with Angleton to see Ben Gurion. The mission failed; the Suez crisis ensued.

Roosevelt's career seems, in retrospect, to have followed three parallel paths: operative for the CIA, activist for the Arab cause, agent for big corporations eyeing the market of the Middle East. Were the three paths only one?

Benjamin Welles

Mr. Welles is the former diplomatic correspondent of *The New York Times*.

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NSA Spying

The Most Secret Agents

We now know that agencies presumed to be protecting the United States from foreign threats have in fact used some of their resources to violate Americans' constitutional rights. The army conducted an extensive surveillance of individuals opposed to the Vietnam war. The CIA, in operation CHAOS and other programs, spied on "dissident" groups. Domestic organizations such as the IRS and the FBI have also strayed from their responsibility to enforce the law, violating constitutional rights by snooping and, in the COINTELPRO activities of the FBI, by seeking to manipulate the actions of groups. We have discovered all of this because of leaks from officials, investigative reporting, lawsuits filed under the Freedom of Information Act, and congressional investigations.

There is, however, one organization whose intrusions into the private activities and communications of American citizens we are only beginning to glimpse. The National Security Agency (NSA), buried deep in the Defense Department, remains behind the curtain of official protection that in the past covered all intelligence organizations. Consider its position:

- Although it employs more people than the CIA does, its charter remains totally secret, as does its budget.
- NSA is completely exempt from the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, which has been used to pry documents from the FBI and the CIA.
- Disclosure of the secrets of NSA is a criminal offense with no requirement that the government prove intent to injure the national defense as it must do for airing secrets of the CIA and Defense Department.

All of this seemed reasonable if the agency had limited itself to its primary function: the making and breaking of codes. Of all the institutions gaining respectability during World War II, the code breakers stand close to the top. It's well known that Japanese codes were cracked with a great impact on the battles of the Pacific. Only recently have we learned that the most secret codes of the Nazi high command were read throughout the war. No enemy has been shown to have broken any important American code.

This was an impressive record and Congress responded by tightening the laws making the release of codes or cryptographic information a crime. In the early 1950s, NSA was created in great secrecy by a still-classified presidential directive. Until recently the government would say nothing about what NSA does except for one enigmatic statement in the official government manual. Indeed it has been reported that one of the main government objections to the release of the Pentagon Papers, pressed in in-camera proceedings in the attempt to get an injunction against publication, was that it revealed the simple fact that the United States intercepts coded messages of foreign governments. The NSA budget is kept secret, hidden within the budget of the Department of Defense, of which it is nominally part.

As long as NSA remained out of the domestic affairs of the nation, there was little reason to object. Recently, however, there have been disturbing signs that NSA, like the other intelligence organizations, has over the years turned at least some of its attention to the political activities of American citizens.

The first tantalizing clue, virtually ignored at the time, came with the release of the so-called Huston Plan documents, relating to the White House proposal to step up surveillance of domestic "dissidents." Copies of these memoranda, taken by John Dean as part of his effort not to be a fall guy, revealed Nixon approval of a widespread program of illegal activities. Public attention focused on whether the plan actually went into effect not on the description of the current and past activities of the intelligence agencies. It was not known at the time that the memoranda were inaccurate, disguising existing violations of the law, a matter to which I return below.

Although the memorandum written by the interagency committee shows NSA to be an active participant in the discussions and its director, Vice Admiral Noel Gayler, as a signer of the report, we do not know what the report says about NSA activities since the entire discussion of its activities is deleted even from the most complete text available, that published by the House Judiciary Committee in its remarkable Statement of Information regarding White House Surveillance Activities (Book VII). However the discussion of this subject in White House aide Tom Huston's memo to President Nixon, printed in the same volume, provides the first official clues to NSA activities. Here is what Huston wrote to the President regarding NSA:

> Recommendation: *Present interpretation should be broadened to permit and program for coverage by NSA of the communications of US citizens using international facilities.* Rationale: *The FBI does not have the capacity to monitor international communications. NSA is currently doing so on a restricted basis, and the information it has provided has been most helpful. Much of this information is particularly useful to the White House and it would be to our disadvantage to allow the FBI to determine what NSA should do in this area without regard to our own requirements. No appreciable risk is involved in this course of action.*

On July 23, 1970 Huston sent a memorandum to the heads of all intelligence agencies, including NSA, reporting the results of their exercise. The memorandum, whose subject was given as "Domestic Intelligence," listed a number of changes in procedures that the President had approved. The first item read as follows:

> 1) Interpretive Restraint on Communications Intelligence. *National Security Council Intelligence*

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Directive Number 6 (NSCID-6) is to be interpreted to permit NSA to program for coverage the communications of US citizens using international facilities.

Even in documents labeled "Top Secret Handle via COMINT Channels only" (*i.e.*, via NSA channels) there is ambiguity. Communications "using international facilities" clearly refers to telephone, telegram and teletype messages sent by American citizens to other Americans or foreigners beyond the borders of the United States.

The implication of these documents is that while NSA had the capability of monitoring the communications of Americans, it was doing so, if at all, only to a very limited degree. In fact that was as incorrect as the assertion in the same documents that the CIA opening of overseas mail had come to a halt. The intelligence community was apparently not prepared to inform the White House, or at least Tom Huston, of all that it was doing at the time. How much others in the White House knew cannot be established from these documents.

NSA in 1970 was engaged in its own massive illegal domestic surveillance operation on the international communications of American citizens of interest to the CIA operation-CHAOS people. The description of that operation in the Rockefeller commission report is worth quoting in full because it is the only description we have of what NSA does and is capable of doing in monitoring international communications:

In addition, Operation CHAOS received materials from an international communications activity of another agency of the government. The Operation furnished a watch list of names to the other agency and received a total of approximately 1100 pages of materials overall. The program to furnish the Operation with these materials was not terminated until CHAOS went out of existence. All such materials were returned to the originating agency by the CIA in November 1974 because a review of the materials had apparently raised a question as to the legality of their being held by CIA. The materials concerned for the most part anti-war activities, travel to international peace conferences and movements of members of various dissident groups. The communications passed between the United States and foreign countries. None was purely domestic.

There can be no doubt, given Huston's memoranda, that the "other agency" is NSA. Given a person's name it can, apparently without monitoring that individual's home or office telephone, record and transcribe at least some of his or her international communications. That would mean that NSA does, as is often rumored, record all international communications leaving the United States (as it records all Soviet coded communications). Computer means must be available to scan those conversations and pick out those of interest to NSA.

Indirect confirmation of the existence of such a technical capability came with the release of the Colby Report sent to the President last December. Attached to the letter is a Colby memorandum of May 1973 ordering the agency to limit its activities in a number of areas. One of the attachments to the 1973 memorandum seems to confirm that the CIA has assisted in the development of computer technology for reading voices from tape. It authorized the CIA to continue to cooperate in such research but not to actually read any tapes itself.

What is of interest to the agency?

NSA is in large part a service bureau responding to the requests of others. For the CIA CHAOS operation, it spied on the communications of the antiwar movement. The information collected must have related in large part to legal political activities fully protected by the bill of rights.

If NSA performed this service for the CIA CHAOS program, surely it was available to other parts of the CIA, to the FBI, DIA and to the armed service intelligence organizations. And what about the White House? Recall Huston's remark that "much of this information is particularly useful to the White House," and consider the interest White House political types had in various kinds of international communications—the telephone calls of members of Congress, the cables of journalists, the teletypes of businessmen. A shrewd NSA director could provide the White House, presumably on a White House-only basis, with a continuing stream of valuable political intelligence. Should one doubt that successive directors of NSA have understood this potential? Huston's comment suggests not.

All of this activity is a clear violation of the Fourth Amendment, which bans unreasonable searches and seizures and requires a court order before conversations can be intercepted. Americans are fully entitled to the protection of the amendment even if their conversations leave the bounds of this country. They are entitled to Constitutional protection against actions of the American government even if they are themselves overseas.

President Ford has, according to the White House press spokesman, directed the attorney general to obey throughout the country the recent DC Circuit Court opinion that warrants are required for all wiretaps on American citizens who are not agents of foreign powers. The first question to ask is whether this directive applies as well to the activities of the National Security Agency. The Senate and House Intelligence Committees should pick up where these clues leave off and see that NSA's spying on Americans is fully exposed. Then Congress must legislate to end abuses.

Morton H. Halperin

Mr. Halperin, now associated with the ACLU and the Center for National Security Studies, was in 1969 on the staff of the National Security Council. He has filed a civil suit charging Henry Kissinger and others with illegally wiretapping his home telephone.

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Congress' CIA Cover-up

Getting Out the Truth

by Michael J. Harrington

If a President engages in a cover-up of government wrongdoing, as happened in the Nixon White House, he can be challenged through the process of impeachment, which amounts to indictment and trial by the Congress. But what do we do if the Congress engages in a cover-up? Individual members can be censured or expelled, of course, but what if the cover-up is institutional, a product of the most time-honored rules and rituals?

This is precisely the problem that confronts us in the unfolding story of CIA and other intelligence agency misdeeds. To be sure presidential decisions and actions are involved here too, but now we have a situation where members of Congress, in their capacity as overseers of intelligence agency operations, had knowledge of the most blatant crimes and improprieties and nevertheless did nothing. The instance I am most familiar with concerns the CIA's accomplishments on our behalf in Chile in the early 1970s. The reactions to that record by those who came to hear of it are a sobering illustration of the great congressional weakness—the habitual reflex of avoidance and acquiescence, masked by the illusion of activity.

In April of last year, CIA Director William Colby appeared at a closed session of Rep. Lucien Nedzi's Armed Services subcommittee on intelligence and described his agency's long-term involvement in the political process in Chile, where a bloody coup against Salvador Allende Gossens in September 1973 had led to the installation of a military dictatorship. Mr. Nedzi had called Colby in at my urging, so naturally I wanted to know what the director had to say. Not being a member of Armed Services, I had to make special arrangements to view the classified transcript in the committee offices—the privilege of any House member—and after some initial difficulties with the staff there, I got my first look at the material on June 4. What it said left me appalled.

The authorization of bribery, the funding of political factions and propaganda campaigns, the fomenting of strikes and demonstrations, a myriad of destabilizing actions—all directed against the duly elected leader of Latin America's most sophisticated democracy—are now matters of public record. Not only does that record indicate violations of standing treaties and other affronts to Chilean sovereignty; it also shows that President Nixon and Secretary Kissinger had lied repeatedly to the American people about our involvement there and that some administration figures had apparently perjured themselves on the matter before certain committees of Congress.

Determined to get some congressional action that would bring these things to light, I approached Mr. Nedzi and asked him what he planned to do with this information. He replied with a philosophical shrug. He had taken the testimony as I asked—what more could one do? This information, after all, was secret.

Knowing full well from my short-term experience as a member of Armed Services (ending in 1973) that Chairman F. Edward Hébert would be even less inclined to pursue the matter than Mr. Nedzi, I spoke with several subcommittee chairmen of House Foreign Affairs, of which I am now a member, and then with some of my staff. I also sought the advice of Larry Stern of *The Washington Post*, a personal friend who clearly understood that the story was not to be released. But the reactions of the subcommittee chairmen and other Foreign Affairs colleagues, though generally sympathetic in tone, were equally lacking in commitment. Yes the Chile story sounded pretty bad, but that was the province of another committee and besides, the information was secret.

I finally wrote to "Doc" Morgan, chairman of the full committee, and to Senator Fulbright. In those two long letters of July 18, I reviewed Colby's April testimony and argued that "the Congress and the American people have a right to know what was done in our name in Chile . . . I urge you to turn this matter to the attention of the Foreign Relations [Affairs] Committee for a complete, public investigation. . . ." I pointed out that the Forty Committee, the interdepartmental body chaired by the President's national security adviser, had authorized the expenditure of about $11 million between 1962 and 1973 to help block Allende's election and then to "destabilize" his government after he won.

"The agency's activities in Chile were viewed as a prototype, or laboratory experiment," I noted, "to test the techniques of heavy financial involvement in efforts to discredit and bring down a government." I gave a general breakdown of the amounts authorized from 1962 through 1973, and explained to the respective chairmen that since acquiring this information I had tried to persuade well-positioned colleagues

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Mr. Harrington is the Democratic congressman from Massachusetts' sixth district.

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to pursue the facts but that nothing seemed to be happening. I said I was writing to them as a last resort. Rep. Morgan did not answer my letter. Sen. Fulbright replied, but not very substantively, suggesting that the real solution to the problem was the establishment of a joint committee on oversight.

I felt ambivalent at this point as to how I ought to proceed—I did want to stick with the congressional process but could see no obvious lines to follow. At any rate the matter was set aside in my preoccupation with the summer's major event: the impeachment proceedings of the House Judiciary Committee. Then on September 6, Seymour Hersh of *The New York Times* called me up to inquire about the context in which those letters had been written, saying that he had a copy of one of them. I told him I didn't want the issue raised in this manner and, suspecting he may only have heard a rumor, I said I wouldn't comment on the substance of the letter until I saw his story in print. He assured me I could read it in the *Times* on Sunday, two days later, which I did.

Shortly thereafter Mr. Nedzi asked me to appear before his Armed Services subcommittee to account for the egregious leak. I explained to the group, meeting against my objection in closed session, that the *Times* had not gotten the story from me or my office. But this was not satisfactory, for the point was raised that House Rule XI, Section 27(o) says that no evidence or testimony taken in secret session may be released or used in a "public session" without the consent of the committee. A further issue was the pledge I had to sign in order to read the Chile material, which said that classified information would not be divulged to any unauthorized person. Unauthorized persons, the ensuing exchange made clear, included other members of Congress.

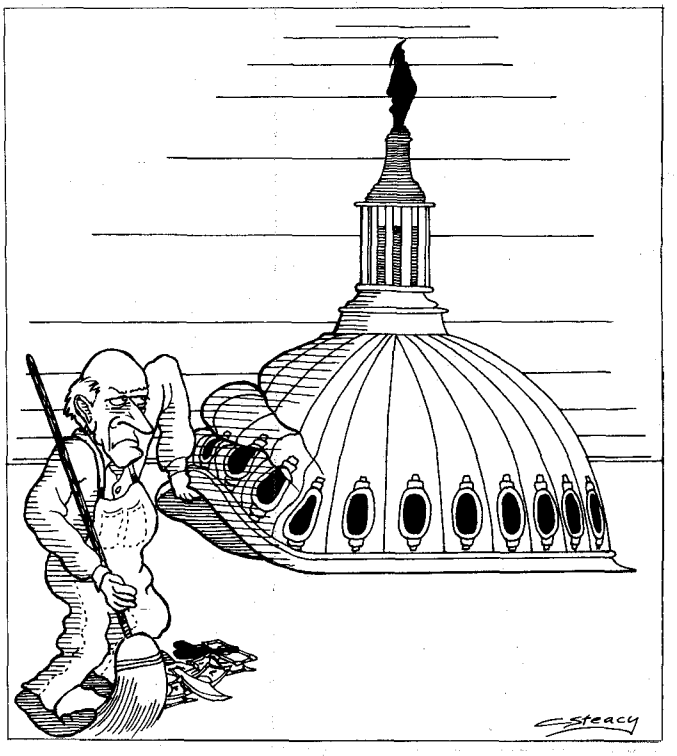
This meeting did not maintain the highest level of discourse—one member compared me to Benedict Arnold—but I tried to make to the subcommittee a distinction between genuine concern for the national security and the facile use of that label to cover official acts of duplicity and illegality. Suggesting this distinction was one of the principal lessons of Vietnam and Watergate, I maintained that the cover-up of US actions in Chile was yet another case of national security's fraudulent application. My remarks did not set well with the subcommittee.

Nevertheless the storm seemed to pass. The next day I wrote to Mr. Nedzi asking that a transcript of the session we had just completed be made available to me when it was prepared. The letter was never answered, and I concluded that Armed Services had decided to drop the matter. I went off to campaign for reelection.

Meanwhile Mr. Hersh had turned over another rock, and in December and January wrote a series of stories alleging that the CIA had conducted a program of massive surveillance of American citizens in direct violation of its charter. Although cynics might have suggested that this only amounted to bureaucratic overlap with the FBI, the revelation jolted Congress in a way that harassment and assassination of foreigners never seemed to—possibly because some reports charged that the agency had snooped on senators and representatives. In any case hard on the heels of the President's establishment of the Rockefeller commission, the Senate voted to set up a select committee to investigate the full range of US intelligence activities. I proposed formation of a similar committee in the House, and after a month-long minuet of maneuver and delay, we had a select committee, too. I felt pretty good about it until the Speaker announced his choice for chairman—Lucien Nedzi.

Lucien Nedzi, the man who had sat on his hands as chairman of that permanent subcommittee on intelligence since 1971, who had listened to the agency horror stories about the bludgeoning of a democracy in Latin America without so much as a murmur to his colleagues—this was the man assigned to conduct the special investigation that would logically include his own lack of action as a subject of inquiry. I went to the floor of the House on the day his chairmanship became official and said I thought it was an outrage. This indiscretion, I was told later by horrified staff and colleagues, was not likely to advance my career—I had been given a seat on the committee myself and would therefore have to work with him—but I felt it had to be said.

Other members of the select committee later came to agree with me. The press really had the scent by now, and it soon came out that Nedzi, as chairman of that Armed Services subcommittee, had been briefed on CIA assassination plots more than a year before and,



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Hands Off Policy

"I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go Communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people."

—Henry Kissinger, June 1970

". . . we are prepared to have the kind of relationship with the Chilean government that it is prepared to have with us."

—President Nixon, February 1971

"(The US government) financed no candidates, no political parties before or after the September 8 or September 4 (elections in 1970)."

—Charles Meyer, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, March 1973

"The United States did not seek to pressure, subvert, influence a single member of the Chilean Congress (which confirmed Allende) at any time in my entire four years."

—Edward Korry, US Ambassador to Chile (1967-1971), March 1973

". . . we had nothing to do with the political destabilization in Chile, the US government had nothing to do with it."

—Harry Schlaudeman, Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy in Chile (1969-1973), June 1974

". . . the United States government, the Central Intelligence Agency, had no role in the overthrow of the regime in Chile."

—James Schlesinger, Secretary of Defense, June 1974

"The CIA had nothing to do with the coup, to the best of my knowledge and belief."

—Henry Kissinger, September 1973

"There is no doubt in my mind, our government had no involvement in any way whatsoever in the coup itself."

—President Ford, September 1974

once again, had done nothing. With this news in hand, the select committee Democrats rebelled, demanding a different chairman. But Speaker Albert balked at dealing with the controversy, advising patience, and the full House later gave Nedzi a resounding vote of confidence by refusing to accept his resignation. This left Nedzi in charge of a committee with which he refused to work, and the investigation came to a standstill.

A major reason for that vote and the subsequent select committee stalemate is what was happening back at Armed Services. Curiously that committee's leadership decided to take up the question of my access to its classified files—stemming from the Chile controversy nine months before—at the very moment when Mr. Nedzi's failure as an overseer of intelligence operations had come to national attention. On June 10, five days after *The New York Times* broke the story of Nedzi's inaction on assassination schemes and at the height of the controversy over his remaining as Select Committee chairman, House Armed Services met in an improperly announced closed session and, without a quorum present, voted unanimously to bar me from further access to its files. No notice had been given me that this action was being considered—in fact I didn't find out about it until two days later.

I won't dwell on the several ways in which this action, reaffirmed at a later date by a narrow majority of the total committee, was itself a violation of House rules, except to say that a committee cannot take away the privileges a congressman holds under the rules of the House as a whole—one such privilege being access to all committee records, regardless of committee membership. A more telling point is the action's glaring hypocrisy.

Columnist Jack Anderson, for example, was quick to say that he has received leaks of classified information from many members of House Armed Services on many occasions—"I have no difficulty getting secrets out of that committee when I want them," he said. There are tolerable leaks and intolerable leaks, apparently, and the characterization depends not on the strict dictates of the rules but on the current interests of the committee leadership or the Executive branch.

The Armed Services action was perfectly timed to shift the focus of debate on the handling of classified material from Lucien Nedzi to Michael Harrington. And at least over the short term, the tactic seems to have worked. Certainly it contributed to the outpouring of affection for the harried select committee chairman who just happened to have his resignation considered by the House on the day of the second Armed Services vote against me. From the swirl of publicity over another member's endangering of the nation's defenses, Mr. Nedzi was borne up on wings of angels. The vote was 290 to 64.

If one takes a step back from all of this, what emerges is not a narrow controversy over a chairmanship and a

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member's prerogatives, but a pattern of congressional acquiescence in the seductive game of shared secrets. It starts with the pleasant feeling of being privy to things unknown to the ordinary citizen, but it works very much like blackmail. The more you know about dubious secret operations, the more you are responsible for hiding, and the more you hide, the tighter the grip of the State Department or the CIA or the Pentagon. A large part of Lucien Nedzi's problem is that he got to know so many and such distasteful secrets that he was effectively bound and gagged by them.

There are only two ways to avoid that position. You can stick your head in the sand and let the administration handle such things, or you can challenge the terms of the game itself, for the game is basically a fraud. Certainly the United States needs a first-rate intelligence gathering system, and maintaining that system will require that we keep some secrets. But the acceptance of a classification system gone wild—the mindless rubber-stamping of every conceivable piece of information with the national security label—has obscured the distinction between legitimate intelligence gathering and manipulation of people and institutions. It has provided the cover for almost every kind of crime and impropriety at home, and it has sanctioned covert adventures overseas that have done tremendous damage to our international standing.

After 10 years of Vietnam and the Watergate affair, the American people understand this. They know that their leaders have lied routinely, cloaking arrogance and bullying and greed in terms of the national interest. They know that a secret agency that can overthrow a foreign government is a threat to democracy here. They know that a Congress that will turn away or masquerade to hide those kinds of actions can also dissemble in its handling of just about anything else. The Congress knows this, too, but refuses to admit it. And that is why the House investigation of US intelligence operations will remain a touchy undertaking no matter who is doing the investigating. In the back of every member's mind is the uncomfortable sense that the biggest scandal in the sordid story of CIA wrongdoing is the failure of effective oversight—the cover-up by the Congress.

The Man Who Would Be Speaker

Phillip Burton

by Lincoln Caplan

On the June afternoon that Lucien Nedzi offered his resignation as chairman of the House Select Committee on Intelligence, the House floor was crowded and buzzing with the sounds of business. Word that Nedzi had kept secret for a year a CIA briefing on matters the select committee would now be probing had worsened the initial tension about Nedzi's chairmanship. Speaker Carl Albert's appointment of Nedzi had stirred criticism because Nedzi happens also to chair the standing Armed Services CIA oversight subcommittee, whose previous derelictions required the creation of the select committee.

Phillip Burton prowled on the periphery of the House floor, pulling on a cigarette, peering over his glasses during the debate about whether to accept Nedzi's resignation. He spoke with various colleagues, including Michael Harrington (D, Mass.), who had been rebuked by a usually dormant subcommittee of Armed Services for leaking confidential information on the CIA's 1973 "destabilizing" operations in Chile. Eventually Burton took a seat, fidgeting like a basketball coach on the sidelines during a play-off game, while other members spoke. When Burton was recognized at the floor microphone he spoke briefly on behalf of Nedzi—that is, against accepting the Nedzi resignation. His speech was unpolished, occasionally ungrammatical and effective. The fingers on his left hand made a fist, then opened wide as he spoke. Murmuring on the floor got louder even before Burton had finished and left the microphone. Later members of the House reported overhearing colleagues mutter audibly, "That's it, that's the vote" when Burton stated, "I for one am going to vote against accepting this resignation." The vote was a lopsided 290-64 to reject Mr. Nedzi's resignation.

In explanation of his position, Burton cited Nedzi's impeccable record on civil liberties and his timely break from the hawks on the Vietnam war. More to the point,

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Burton wanted to undermine the "ultras seeking enough turmoil to abort the entire inquiry into the intelligence community." The Democratic insurgents on the Armed Services Committee got their wrists slapped but not so hard that they thought Burton wanted to sabotage an investigation, put aside the infighting and fuss about the select committee that followed.

Phillip Burton, at 49, has been a representative from California's sixth district since 1964—once called "America's most glamorous slum," it includes the heart of San Francisco. The Democratic caucus elected him chairman in December and since then the intense and bearish Burton, who looks like actor Jim Backus, has surfaced as a proven and pragmatic deliverer of votes in the House. Despite his public statement on behalf of Nedzi, Burton more often operates behind the scenes twisting arms, striking deals, making compromises that help pass bills. His power is not easy to gauge. Certainly his reputation was enhanced when Nelson Rockefeller built his first intimate political dinner as Vice President around Burton. A colleague called him a political nymphomaniac. He works the phones day and night—Burton is a night person—and politics is his life. Many consider the caucus chairman one of the best political actors in Washington—acerbic, prescient and intelligent—who thrives on and has mastered intricacies of the House few outsiders understand.

He was born in Cincinnati in 1926, the eldest of three boys. His father worked as a salesman during the Depression, before entering medical school at the age of 36. The family relocated in San Francisco when the senior Burton became an internist. Phillip Burton went to San Francisco public schools, the University of Southern California—where he switched from premedical to prelaw studies—and Golden Gate Law School. During the Korean war he served as a lieutenant in the air force and soon after he was elected to the California General Assembly as its youngest member and the only Democrat to unseat a Republican incumbent—a 32-year veteran and the speaker *pro tem* of the assembly—in the state's landslide for Eisenhower. In the 1956 victory Burton claims to have "personally met" three of every 10 voters in his district. His congressional office in San Francisco is noted today for volume and quality of constituent services, including Chinese and Spanish speaking staff, and his campaigns are remarkable for their lack of expense and reliance on Burton's personal presence. Once he ran unopposed. Because he has always won with more than 70 percent of the vote, opposition has been token.

An aide calls Burton a consistent liberal, which is how Burton likes to think of himself, a champion of the poor and the dispossessed. His brother John, an able, freewheeling, rather whimsical freshman congressman from California's fifth district, terms Phillip a "blue-collar" liberal. Phillip Burton was an early critic of the Vietnam war—one of seven House members to vote against it in 1965—a staunch supporter of a guaranteed minimum income program, a passionate proponent of legislation to compensate mineworkers for black lung.

Colleagues say he is a quick study and have granted him the unusual honor of using him as an expert consultant, especially on welfare. He prefers oral briefing to reading staff reports and he reads periodicals to keep up on political news. Burton does not keep the works of Founding Fathers tucked in a drawer for late-night inspiration.

Critics marvelled when Burton defied conventional wisdom and insisted that the House tack an amendment to repeal the oil depletion allowance to a tax-cut measure last spring. A month after the Burton-led caucus set the chain of events in motion, President Ford reluctantly signed the tax bill with the depletion rider. A depletion amendment to any other legislation would have surely been vetoed, thus confirming the logic of Burton's insistence on the rider. Burton displayed his talents in a series of tricky parliamentary maneuvers in January that helped bring about the death of the House Internal Security Committee. He had had no use for the committee since 1949 when it was still the House Un-American Activities Committee. He has been a backer of Israel, stating that the United States has a "moral and political responsibility to lend support as the strongest nation on earth to a smaller democratic society . . . just as if Denmark were in trouble." His interest in Israel involves a strong sense of American commitments.

Burton's is not a traditional list of heroes. Helen Gahagan Douglas, for whom he volunteered in 1950; George Norris, the progressive Republican who made his mark with the TVA; Robert La Follette, Republican turned Progressive who authored the Senate resolution for an inquiry into the Teapot Dome scandal and Wayne Morse, whose Republicanism initially bothered Burton, represent the kind of liberalism Burton strives for. He also mentions Cesar Chavez—with whom Burton worked in the California legislature before the United Farm Workers were organized; Burton considers him "one of the giants of our time." "Dr. King," and "obviously" Franklin D. Roosevelt have been influences on his politics.

Once Burton wanted to be a senator from California. Now he isn't sure. During the spring, he spoke openly about his desire to be majority leader of the House. Since the recent commotion there—contention that, Burton says, served the House like an escape valve on a tea kettle—Burton has been more discreet about his ambitions. Carl Albert is a worrier and Burton does not want to appear to challenge the Speaker, lest he feel inclined to stay. There is talk of Albert retiring this autumn. Nor does Burton want to appear to challenge majority leader Thomas "Tip" O'Neill. Both Burton and O'Neill are good copy and know it; both men seem intent on stilling the waters of controversy about

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Burton's role in the House leadership, for their quite different purposes.

Burton has been content to keep himself in the news as a rising and unpredictable star. At a down-home fundraiser for the Democratic Study Group, Burton even showed off his ability to milk a cow. He is inhibited by people's perception of him as power hungry. A man torn between the desire to get things done and a desire not to appear avaricious cannot hurt himself—or his leverage on the next farm bill—milking a cow.

The House s inability to override President Ford's veto of the jobs bill, the farm bill, and strip mining and housing legislation caused disgruntlement about the leadership among members, especially the large and much-touted freshman class. Since there are mixed opinions in Washington about Burton's compassion, volatility, arrogance, even officiousness, no one view of Burton dominates among the freshman members. Many however remember his fund-raising efforts for them, his personal solicitousness when they first arrived in Washington, his availability for consultation and advice about the workings of the House, his concrete help in securing desirable committee assignments. Word spread quickly that Burton is a man of honor, a man who keeps promises.

Burton understands the "buddy system" in the House, even across the aisle, and has a knack for anticipating change within the body. He seems to have bridged the gap between the older members and the newcomers, who were largely responsible for his election as caucus chairman. Because the new members have complained about the lack of communication between the leadership and themselves—for instance, over House organization and over important pending legislation, like the Ways and Means tax reform package—it may be that Burton's next test will be whether he can use the Democratic caucus as a vehicle for constructive communication and change within the House, in deference to the wants of many freshmen. Even long-term members, like Richard Bolling of Missouri, are afraid that the Congress is "looking like a bunch of idiots." Burton says he is from the school of straight football. When there is a problem, he likes to figure out a straightforward solution.

When Congress could not muster enough votes to overturn Ford's strip-mining veto, one theory about the failure was that Albert and O'Neill refused to use Burton's cloakroom skills to muster the vote. Like Achilles, Burton was banished, sulking, to his tent. Seasoned and freshmen members alike didn't find the explanation plausible. First, they pointed out, as a member of the leadership Burton had, and fulfilled, a responsibility to do what he could to strengthen a coalition of centrist Democrats, Dixiecrats and those on the left to overturn the veto. Second, some argued, Burton, unlike Achilles, *has* no weak spot.

His reputation as a productive legislator—drillmaster, yeoman, den mother and hustler—may prove his liability. So he's versatile but does he have stature? Can he be a trustworthy, unifying force? Burton is not oblivious. Followers and detractors note Burton's language (he swears a lot) and his past habit of overlooking social and political convention to get things done. When he lost to John McPhall as whip, the traditional stepping stone before majority leader and Speaker of the House, he made up his mind to create a new access to power through the caucus. He accomplished that and now he has become watchful, even circumspect.

Burton is a good bridge, hearts and poker player, though his brother John claims to beat him and says middle brother Robert, president of San Francisco Community College, is the best in the family. Card playing associates attest to the cunning of his play and note parallels between the exercise of Burton's intellectual skills and his impatience at politics and cards. Burton has played poker aggressively, in every hand, bumping into players, raising them. A rule of thumb in poker is that if you want to win big, you don't play every hand.

Burton's mellowing may be a function of age and caring for his health. It may be that he has not changed at all, as his wife Sala argues. She knows that some people see him as tough, but she thinks instead that he is thorough and serious and has been since they met at a California Young Democrats meeting in 1950. It may be that Burton wants to be a big winner. As one Burton staffer said, Burton knows "he should be Speaker of the House, if he doesn't blow it."

There's a lot of complaining about the House leadership. Despite Burton's claims that he has no intention of leapfrogging Tip O'Neill to the House speakership and the protestations of new members that hierarchy in the House is less important than communication among members, there is talk that Burton and O'Neill must end their game of chicken and confront differences in style and outlook as leaders in the House. O'Neill responds to questions about Burton's future role in the House with, "I have no comment about that." He prefers to take the long view, chatting about the successes of the last Congress—"the best in 100 years"— the promise of this one with a year and a half left and the realities of running a House "where nearly everyone is in the Democratic party." Burton, whose aggressiveness is decorous, speaks purposefully about House programs and development of policy by the Democratic caucus and ducks questions about the structure of House leadership.

Once Burton said that his wife mended the political fences he broke and he repeats the line with satisfaction. He seems to be doing some of that on his own, as well—or at least trying not to break any new fences—perhaps to prove that, if he is a maverick, he is a maverick of the establishment and his adaptability is what it's said to be.

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Stanley Kauffmann on films

Dog Days

Jaws (Universal). The ads show a gaping shark's mouth. If sharks can yawn, that's presumably what this one is doing. It's certainly what I was doing all through this picture, even in those few moments when I was frightened. There's no great trick to frightening a person: anyone can do it by jumping out of a closet at you—which would be both tedious and irritating at the same moment that your heart skipped. Thus with the few scary moments in this film.

The publicity has emphasized the ingenuity in the construction of the artificial shark used in *Jaws*. Well the shark is the best constructed element in it. The script comes from a novel by Peter Benchley, who also worked on the screenplay. There was also much publicity about how the novel was constructed and revised to suit the publisher, the script for the producers. Fine. No one expects a scare film to breathe Shelleyan purity, but need the stitching and the padding be quite so obvious? If the story isn't clear enough for you—"you" meaning a retarded chimpanzee—the producers have laid on a noisy score by John Williams that tells you when trouble is coming and when you're supposed to be excited.

A killer shark depredates the beach of an island summer resort. Several people are killed. Finally the shark is killed. That's the story. But to fill it out for two hours we get stuff about the island police chief and his wife; a mayor who wants to hush things up for the sake of business; a knowledgeable young ichthyologist and his tussles with a salty old shark-hunter; etc. At last the mayor admits the crisis so the police chief, the young man and the old pro go hunting for the shark. They catch him, but he catches the old pro, in a sort of Moby-Dicklet sequence.

The only performer worth mentioning is Robert Shaw as the old pro and I mention him only to hope that he is getting rich. This good actor certainly ought to get something out of all the non-acting he's doing these days. The direction is by Steven Spielberg who did the unbearable *Sugarland Express*. At least here he has shucked most of his arty mannerisms and has progressed almost to the level of a stock director of the '30s—say, Roy del Ruth.

Rollerball (United Artists). I used to read a lot of science fiction in the 1950s in connection with editorial work, and even then there were a number of worn clichés that only really imaginative writers could usefully employ. One of them was a future society in which deplorable traits of the present had been exalted, rendered into codes and rituals. Now comes a film with a script by William Harrison that lolls lazily back right in the middle of this sci-fi cliché.

Rollerball is the name of a popular game in the not-too-distant future, a vicious game played on roller skates on a sort of enlarged roller derby track, using a heavy steel ball and a few motorcycles. The players wear spiked gloves like the Roman gladiatorial cestus; bad injuries, even fatalities, occur. The game is played internationally between cities—for instance Houston against Tokyo—before huge crowds. The idea is that the blood hunger of peoples produced the game which is now promoted and managed by great international syndicates to drain off aggression and keep people controllable.

Few high school English teachers who have read the above paragraph will fail to be reminded of stories they have seen by bright students.

The plot centers on the efforts of one syndicate to force a star player to retire, presumably because he is becoming the center of a personality cult (although this is unclear—the syndicate has also publicized him greatly). Norman Jewison directed at about the Spielberg level. The real star ought to have been the art director, but Robert Laing doesn't do much more than one would have expected.

The star is played by James Caan—Mr. Nothing *in excelsis*—so it's a bit hard to credit him as a saving remnant of human spirit standing out against regimentation. The head of the syndicate is John Houseman, who showed in *The Paper Chase* that he knows how to exhibit his personality skillfully, which many people called fine acting. Here he continues as a personality performer in a slightly modified key. Houseman may become the new Sidney Greenstreet.

In the course of his rebellion Caan visits the world information bank in Geneva where he talks to a computer-god reminiscent of HAL in *2001*. The head librarian is Ralph Richardson who plays the nondescript short role with great good cheer. Why not? He probably got a great good check.

The Drowning Pool (Warner Bros.). Paul Newman certainly got a good check for this one. He's not only one of the stars, he's one of the producers. And his wife, Joanne Woodward, is in the film. The family must have done OK.

Forgive my dwelling on money this way, but most of the time during these three pictures, all I could think of was that someone was getting something out of them and it wasn't I. Let these people make 10 times what they got if only they give me *something* in return for watching their flicks. I'd have liked to see Newman in a good suspense picture—*Harper*, the antecedent of this one, was better. But to watch a bad suspense film, to watch a bad category film in any category (or, as it's called now, genre) seems more wasteful than other kinds of bad films.

This one was made from a novel by Ross Macdonald that I haven't read, but he's generally been better than he's made to look here. The director was Stuart Rosenberg, never exactly light-fingered yet he made the very pleasant *Pocket Money*. Before three minutes are up you know you're in for a lot of sententious imitation Chandler: a private eye getting into a situation that is supposed to evoke moral resonances for our time. But it doesn't have the usual tight beginning of suspense films that usually come unglued; this one begins unglued.

Newman arrives in New Orleans from Los Angeles to work for a rich

(continued on page 35)

Films Worth Seeing

Love and Death. Woody Allen *v.* Napoleon in Russia. War and pieces. Sometimes strained, still Allen's best.

Monty Python and the Holy Grail. King Arthur crowned—with night soil and just about everything else. English lunacy, likable, sometimes laughable.

Nashville. Country music as US societal locus. Huge, smooth, generally entertaining comment, but more size than weight.

The Passenger. It's still necessary to see any Antonioni film. That's all.

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SUMMER BOOK ISSUE

Murder, Mystery and Private Eyes

The Sordid Truth

Donald Hamilton

Publish only in paperback and you'll never make it big. This used to be a writer's kind of truth, for steady sales year in and year out depend upon cloth publication and library sales. John D. MacDonald has put Travis McGee between boards twice now, and the annual Christie always appears as a hardbound book first. Of course making it big is pretty relative, and Donald Hamilton is a case in point: with over 17 million of his books in print, with five of his books made into movies, he hardly needs to worry about sales. Even so, his books seldom show up on library shelves (a quick check of two local public libraries reveals 47 Christies, eight MacDonalds, not one Hamilton) and while more and more people know that Travis McGee drinks Plymouth gin (or even, after only two books, that Jonathan Hemlock drinks Laphroig when not stealing art treasures or climbing the Eiger) no one can tell you what Matt Helm drinks.

Matt Helm is Donald Hamilton's series figure—for the loyal audiences are best kept on the string by a series hero, as Conan Doyle discovered long ago with Sherlock Holmes—and he is so credible a character and so busy keeping himself alive while defending his country's interests, he hasn't time to insist that his Martini be shaken and not stirred. Indeed one learns relatively little about Matt Helm that is explicit, although a great deal by indirection, and this is one of his attractions. He grows on one, as his actions reveal his attitudes. A fair amount of philosophy—conservative, hard-nosed, clear-eyed—is slipped in here and there but Hamilton does not permit Helm any windy discourses on the state of the economy. On fishing, guns, travel and women, yes; but most of the time is spent on sheer compulsive storytelling.

Although Matt Helm is not as widely known as James Bond, Hercule Poirot, Sam Spade, Phillip Marlow or Lew Archer, he has not been ignored by the critics. While there is a *JDM Bibliophile* which has reached its 19th issue and while every number of *The Armchair Detective* appears to comment on Father Brown or Nero Wolfe and virtually never on Matt Helm, the tall silent Swede has had his admirers, including the late Anthony Boucher of *The New York Times*. Boucher never let a new Helm book pass without comment, usually highly favorable: he found Hamilton a master of indirect exposition, a "harsh and sometimes shocking" writer in the tradition of Peter Cheyney's "Dark" series, "sternly logical," "the Hammett of espionage," filled with "resolute hardness," "hard-bitten objectivity," and "sheer storytelling compulsion." High praise this. Low praise that Boucher also once linked Donald Hamilton's creation with Sam Durell, the Cajun agent, and Chet Drumm, both manifestly inferior.

Boucher was right the first time. If one wants a summer read, a new Donald Hamilton is to be put in the bag with the new Gavin Lyall, Berkley Mather,

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Desmond Bagley, and Francis Clifford, for taking away to the beach. It is no accident that the company here is all British, for although resolutely American in his attitudes and loyalties, a Donald Hamilton book is nonetheless written to the model of the master of them all, John Buchan. Every once in a while some reviewer hails a new thriller as "in the Buchan vein"—Robert Harling and William Haggard (Richard Clayton) have both received this encomium more than once—when it clearly is not, missing the Hamiltons the while.

John Buchan wrote the classic thriller in *The Thirty-Nine Steps* in 1915 and ever since, British writers in particular—those above and others like Lionel Davidson—have been improving upon him. The model is clean and simple: take an attractive hero with a hint of danger and untold experience in his background (Richard Hannay's South African years, Matt Helm's introduction in 1960 as a quiet and married writer living in Santa Fe, who 15 years earlier was a professional killer for his country). Make these figures fallible but stubborn, resourceful and unwilling to be pushed around or to see others pushed around. Give them an unexpected task to perform, which involves being chased across an exotic landscape, and set obstacles in their way, some predicted and some unpredicted. If the hero is in pursuit, be certain that he also is being pursued, so that he may not come into the open or draw upon the customary resources of society. Better yet have him pursued by both the police and the other side. In a world made up of ever more city-bound readers, have the chase take place in a desert, a wilderness or on the sea, so that hero and evildoers alike must contend with nature and turn nature to their advantage. This last gambit also offers an opportunity for using a variety of knowledge those chair-bound readers will think esoteric, from being able to render a man unconscious by pressing behind his ear just so (an old native trick learned by Hannay while in Africa) or recognizing the "characteristic dimple" a bullet makes when hitting water to know that one is being shot at even before the report is heard (as Helm does in *The Intriguers*). Finally add a woman to the scene, attractive but not too attractive, and see to it that reader and hero do not know whether she is friend or foe.

Allowing for the changes that 60 years have brought to the world, Donald Hamilton is a direct descendant of John Buchan and a master at the craft. The violence is more explicit now, the decisions more cruel, and while Hannay married the girl before sleeping with her, Helm does what he needs to do in the line of duty and good mental health (although he is no womanizer, really preferring a solitary day of hunting or fishing). Above all, the moral ambivalence of the hero's actions bring him, as Boucher noted, "close to the sordid truth of espionage."

The truth is Hamilton tells it pretty much like it is or is proving to have been. Hannay would not have shot anyone in the back; neither will Helm if he can avoid it, but if he must he does. When *The Ambushers* appeared in 1963, its plot about a stray atomic missile and an effort to exterminate a Castro-in-the-making may have seemed a bit fantastic, but it seems less so now. Allowing for the natural excesses of the genre, Hamilton's Helm is about as credible a figure as one can find.

If one doubts that Hamilton is a lineal descendant of Buchan, read *The Ravagers*, the eighth Matt Helm escapade, issued in 1964, the same year John D. MacDonald introduced us to McGee in *The Deep Blue Goodbye*. (The working pace, incidentally, is interesting—there have been 16 McGees in 11 years, and 16 Helms in 16 years. By my reckoning McGee now has to be at least 40, Helm 52. Neither acts like it.) *The Ravagers* is a suspense story made all the tighter by its healthy dose of protagonist and reader ambivalence. The plot turns upon a set of papers that must be allowed to reach the Russians, while Helm makes every effort to appear to stop them in order to give them credibility. The scene is Canada and most of the action focuses on a transcontinental chase from Regina to Brandon to Montreal. I have driven that route more than once and I can testify that Hamilton has too. He has as good an eye and ear for landscape as Buchan had and his Canada (used again in *The Interlopers* in 1969) is a vivid, well-realized place. Just to show he could do it on Buchan's own ground, Hamilton puts Helm into northern Scotland in *The Devastators* (1965), and his Ullapool countryside is authentic (I can attest from having traveled the same road) even though his Kinnochrue does not exist. If you'll settle for the Gaelic Kinloch ("at the head of the lake") Row (originally *rue*, pronounced "roo," and meaning "a cape or point") you'll have a description of the place to which Helm then makes his way.

Hamilton obviously combines his pleasures with his work. He likes to hunt and fish, as all of the books show (and his collection of rather slight stories, *On Guns and Hunting*, drawn together in 1970 from pieces published between 1955 and 1969 in *Outdoor Life*, *Gun World* and *Gun Digest* attests). One can imagine him deciding on which stream or range he would like to fish or hunt next, taking himself there and using the scene later in one of his books. He has brought his readers to Norway, Sweden, Labrador, Mexico, Hawaii and pretty well all over the American Southwest this way and Baja California is promised next.

That trip to Sweden also gave some of the game away, for the book reflects a bit too lovingly on the Swedish landscape and a bit too sternly on Swedish society not to represent a return to a lost love. Hamilton was, in fact, born in Uppsala and oddly enough he apparently is a Swedish count, at least by title. Still the Southwest is his first love as his writing shows. It is arguable that his best written book is one of the earliest, now in print as *Assassins Have Starry Eyes*, but originally published in 1956 under the unhappy title *Assignment: Murder*. Lurking behind its trite cover is one of the very best books of its kind, set (it seems to me) somewhere north of Jemez and east of Espanola in the New Mexico high country, land of piñon forest, scrub and pine, the odor of which permeates the opening scene. And the opening is typical Hamilton, direct and to the point in appearances, ironically misdirective in content: a research boffin from Los Alamos, James Gregory, Ph.D., out alone hunting for deer, is shot in the back on the fifth page, victim he thinks of a city-bred hunter who can't tell human from antler, and he shoots back. There is a good sense for the undeveloped subplot of a marriage that is OK but nothing to base marriage counsellors' success records on, and a subtle awareness of where the Spanish-speaking population of New Mexico fits into the local scene. The book is tough minded from the start; only once does it lapse into the kind of sentimentalism one finds in Raymond Chandler (and that Chandler tried to cover up with hard words), and the solution to the mystery is quite satisfying, thank you.

The point is the book *is* a mystery and so are most of the others. That is unless one demands snowed-in mountain cabins, locked railway coaches, hidden maps and messages (Rache?) scrawled in blood to recognize a mystery. For Hamilton's books are not merely derring-do, all chase and no ratiocination (as the critics of the "classical period" had it). One is

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given the same clues as Helm is given, and can reach the same urgent decisions he reaches as to the ultimate source of danger if one wants. One mustn't be misled by the notion that Hamilton writes "spy fiction" or "thrillers" and that such books do not qualify for the hammock reserved only for the genuine mystery addict. Hamilton has learned, one would guess, from Ross Macdonald back in the days when he was John Ross Macdonald and perhaps even Kenneth Millar, that one can honestly misdirect the reader while setting all the evidence before him. Perhaps *The Shadowers*, in 1964, comes the closest to the "pure" puzzle but all pay proper homage to the Chandler school.

For my money Hamilton has come closer to avoiding the major pitfall of the series figure than Ross Macdonald has done. Obviously if one creates a series character, one presumes his survival through a number of the books, eliminating an element of suspense, but increasing the shock when ready to do a Van der Valk or push one's creation off the Reichenbach Falls. Less obviously perhaps, but more limitingly, the author of books that depend upon a series figure may stunt his growth, for he cannot allow his style (or his character) to depart too far from that which proves that it sells. Not if the writer is a professional and in it for the money, that is. So the writer creates a winning figure and must then repeat at least the major elements of the successful formula thereafter if he is to retain that audience. Ross Macdonald is caught up in this net badly now, each story reading as though it were taken from a textbook co-authored by Freud, Kraft-Ebbing and the Biblical prophets. I find that one can pretty well guess whodunnit with Macdonald—it will be the daughter of the cousin who is really the illigitimate brother of the nephew's youngest uncle twice removed—and one can't yet with Hamilton.

This is not to say that Donald Hamilton has overcome the problems of formula fiction. The last two Matt Helms, *The Intimidators* (1974) and *The Terminators* (1975), are off the standard set by most of the earlier ones (although *The Interlopers*, in 1969, falls off into some pretty unconvincing moments too). The books have grown longer, and their spacing has moved from about nine months to 14 months apart in publication, both signs that the lean and hungry look may be gone. Still one suspects that it has just been set aside for the moment and that Matt Helm will return to form with adventure number 17.

For there have been 16 Helm books to date. A quick summary of their plots shows where we (and Hamilton) have travelled; all are clear descendants of *Assignment: Murder*, so that in many ways it too should be included in the series. Helm was launched (before, I might add, Richard Helms had come much to public notice, so scotch that idea) with *Death of a Citizen* early in 1960, drawing Helm back to the work he had left 15 years before. Not surprisingly his marriage doesn't survive his renaissance, so there is an opportunity to explore the attitudes of men and women toward violence. Later the same year Helm is in Sweden in *The Wrecking Crew*, his wife behind him, and in 1961, in *The Removers*, one finds that his ex-wife still depends upon him and is attracted to him despite her remarriage. This ambivalence is integral to the plot that involves a foreign secret agent who has spent seven years as a sleeper. In 1962, in *The Silencers*, Helm is involved with underground atomic tests and later that year he is charged with rescuing (if he can) and killing (if he must) an American scientist who must be denied to the Russians. This book, *Murderers' Row*, is a departure from its predecessors and rather less good for that. Helm returns to form with *The Ambushers* (1963), that book about the straying atomic missile. At the same time the earlier Helms were reprinted, an indication that the series figure had now caught on.

From this point Hamilton may have had less room to let Helm change. Even so the plots remain complex and convincing and the prose remains taut in the way an old navy hand means when he talks about a tight ship. *The Shadowers* (1964) leads Helm into marriage with a space scientist in order to be able to protect her; *The Ravagers* (the same year) provides that chase across Canada; *The Devastators* (1965) turns on bacteriological warfare; and *The Betrayers* (1966) gives Helm the task of removing his agency's local top man in Hawaii, since he has been doubled. In 1968 we get *The Menacers*, which turns on UFO sightings in Mexico, and which is so much better than Martin Caidin's effort with a similar subject (although in Nebraska) as to be a case study of sheer professional competence. *The Interlopers* followed in 1969: Helm replaces an enemy agent and pursues his delivery route to see what he can unearth. *The Poisoners* (1971) has Helm trying to find out why an agent who was not on assignment has been eliminated; *The Intriguers* (1972) introduces that dimpled water in Mexico; *The Intimidators* (1974) gets Helm into the West Indies; and the current book, *The Terminators*, picks up elements from the 1960 and 1964 books, with the ubiquitous boss back in Washington, "Mac," denying Helm needed information a bit arbitrarily or paranoically. Aficionados will have to wait to see why number 17 takes Helm to Baja California.

Of course there have been non-Helm books as well, two of them—*The Steel Mirror* and *Line of Fire* —very good indeed. Hamilton has tried his hand at shorter stories (*Murder Twice Told*) and at fairly conventional westerns (*Smokey Valley, Mad River,. Man from Santa Clara, Texas Fever*). He writes articles on outdoor subjects, especially boating (having a cruising sailboat of his own). He does a monthly column for a magazine and he has edited a collection for the Western Writers of America (*Iron Men and Silver Stars*). There are other books but this isn't an obituary or a bibliography. All these books show the marks of the professional writer who

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has honed his skills across the years, while drawing upon what he knows best. Publicity materials tells us that Hamilton was born in 1916, came to the States in 1924, was the son of a doctor who was on the faculty of the Harvard Medical School, took a degree in chemistry from the University of Chicago and was stationed during World War II at the Naval Engineering Experiment Station in Annapolis (one of the books is set on the Eastern Shore). Most of this one might have guessed from the books themselves, if one believes that the book reveals the author.

Some pretty unprofessional people got into the act and made two of the Helm books into movies starring Dean Martin. These were fiascos which must have caused Hamilton to wince as he walked to the bank. There may be a TV series and we can hope for a better fate than Archer received at the hands of the scriptwriters. However we look at it, we're still pretty lucky, for at least 12 of those Helm books and three or four of the others are tops in their class. It takes a Buchan or Hammett or a Chandler to achieve anything like that.

Robin W. Winks

Robin W. Winks is professor of history at Yale.

Evil Plots

Ross Macdonald

Any reader who can recognize the difference between an automatic and a revolver knows that Ross Macdonald is the most distinguished living practitioner of what has become known as "hard-boiled" detective fiction and a worthy successor to Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler. In the 25 years that he has been chronicling the adventures of his private eye, Lew Archer, Macdonald has achieved, along with his great popularity, a certain respectability as well. This chiefly means that his works are no longer reviewed back among the literary equivalent of the truss ads but are now featured prominently on the front pages of the leading book reviews (there are a few). As a result some literary critics have discovered some of the most striking characteristics of the Archer books: the close attention to the Southern California subculture, the highly wrought metaphors, the saintly private eye hero, the intensely complicated plots. Among their many excellences, the plots of the Lew Archer novels distinguish them from all other detective fiction. The books seem, at times, to consist entirely of plot, to be about their plots, to be in fact all plot.

Virtually every reviewer remarks on the richly exfoliating complexity of Macdonald's plots: they are dizzying to follow, almost impossible to summarize. Picking up a Lew Archer novel after an interruption, the reader must try to untangle the snarled thread of events with an arduous effort of recollection; along with Archer and other characters, we find it very hard to know where we've been, where we are, and where we are going. Because the novels are usually informed by numerous overlapping and superimposed plots, their differentiation, as well as their ultimate congruence, becomes a subtle and delicate task.

There appear to be four important plots in the Archer books, which turn out to be four versions, or stages, of one complicated sequence of actions; they can be separated artificially, though of course they form a shapely and organic unity. At the risk of sounding both melodramatic and pretentious, I have invented a set of terms for these plots: The Quest of the Archer, The Search for the Past, The Metamorphic Pattern and The Mythic Plot.

The Quest of the Archer is the primary plot, the actual detecting job, a relatively simple and routine affair as Lew Archer describes it. He is hired to perform a specific, comprehensible task—to locate a missing spouse or a runaway child, to recover some stolen property, to investigate the heir to a fortune. He follows the usual procedures in the usual manner: he questions witnesses, makes phone calls, notes times and dates, and so forth, practicing his profession as it should be practiced, acting like a detective in a detective novel. He moves about in a more or less straightforward and logical fashion through a geographically limited space in a relatively short period of time. This is the simple detective plot, and the ease with which it is followed is merely the result of Archer's abilities and our own experience. Archer is generally quite successful at this sort of thing, usually locating the person or object of his quest rapidly and efficiently, although he may be unable to retrieve him, her or it. The child does not wish to return to the parents, the wife refuses to go back to her husband, and somewhere along the way the case has swerved drastically toward violence—invariably a crime occurs.

As we and Archer discover, things are never as simple as they seem. His initial plot now intersects with another and he is forced to find out more about the case. The Quest of the Archer becomes involved with The Search for the Past. This intersection is no mere artificial escape into meaningless complexity, but a very necessary act. Archer's case has resulted in violence or the potential for violence, his client is endangered or vulnerable, or he may have accidentally uncovered some vital additional evidence; for personal, professional or legal reasons Archer must pursue another plot further than the first. This secondary pattern is by far the richest in problems and possibilities, the most volatile and dangerous in the novels; it is also the personal plot of the man or woman Archer initially investigates. Archer takes over the plot of Dolly Kinkaid in *The Chill* (1964), of Davy Spanner in *The Instant Enemy* (1968), of Nicholas Chalmers in *The Goodbye Look* (1969), for example, making their attempts to recapture the meaning of some events in the past his own. The Quest of the Archer becomes inseparable from The Search for the Past.

The synchronization of the two plots so powerfully preoccupies Archer that it dominates the rest of the novel, providing the chief source of tension, suspense, urgency and meaning. Not surprisingly this pattern is the one most often noticed by readers and reviewers, provoking the lengthy mystifications of the newspaper and magazine book pages. The Search for the Past is clearly another name for our old friend, the quest for identity, and in this plot we continually encounter a young man or woman looking for his or her true father or mother, true name, true self. We find at the center of Ross Macdonald's complicated novels, as at the center of Dickens' complicated novels, a suffering child. Here we begin to notice the familiar patterns of the Oedipal situation and hear the echoes of Sophocles, Homer, Joyce and Freud. In this plot we witness the cumulative effect of years of suppressed truth or feeling, a generalized, unspecified guilt operating on the lives of all the characters.

This plot, paradoxically, is both the most dynamic and the most static of all;

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it suggests, incidentally, the curiously static nature of the Archer books in general and indicates the revolutionary departure they make from the tradition of the detective story. In this plot Archer travels significant distances through space, back and forth through all those now familiar California cities, to the Midwest, north to Canada, south to Mexico and so forth. He interviews witnesses to the past: friends, relatives, acquaintances of his client, each of whom contributes his little portion of knowledge. In many cases this plot, too, explodes into violence, and Archer is threatened, beaten or wounded; frequently more deaths occur. The dangers of the detective's personal quest begin to reflect the events of the past. Archer's painful reconstruction of these events begins to obsess him as much as it obsesses the people who have drawn him into it. As he says in *The Chill*, "I had handled cases which opened up gradually like fissures in the firm ground of the present, cleaving far down through the strata of the past."

The past influences the present so strongly for Archer that he stops acting in the present: the novels stand still as he descends into striations of time and event to achieve some perception of the truth. Though he moves forward in space and becomes an actor in a plot filled with events, he moves backward in time, carrying on a retrogressive plot, repeating and reexperiencing the actions and situations of his clients. Ironically the plot he must recapture has already happened, a chain of events over and done with 15 or 20 or more years before. He finds the links that remain, leading inevitably to the actions that fostered the initial plot. Thus Davy Spanner's insane behavior in *The Instant Enemy* is connected to the horrible death of a man many years before; Dolly Kinkaid's repudiation of her marriage is somehow related not only to a murder she witnessed as a child but also to another murder in the Midwest some years earlier. The completed actions must be analyzed and synthesized in order to discover their relationship and significance.

All along, growing gradually and inexorably out of these two plots, is the third, the process of heightening perception Archer undergoes, The Metamorphic Pattern. Metamorphoses proliferate; things and people keep turning into something or someone else. In *Black Money* Francis Martel turns into Feliz Cervantes, then into Pedro Domingo, regressing from cultured French aristocrat to Panamanian peasant. Putative parents turn into foster or adoptive parents, then back into real ones; murderers become victims, while the "victims" turn up alive. Brothers and sisters reveal their true identities; masks are dropped, and disguises and deceptions fall away. An engraved silver box becomes more significant empty than filled with precious objects. A mysterious theft of money becomes the reverse, a spiriting of wealth *into*, rather than out of, a safe. A war hero is revealed as a psychotic weakling; a man's supposed mother turns out to be his wife. A false claimant to a fortune is unmasked as an impostor, then proved to be the man he thought he was impersonating. The literary allusions and suggestions thicken promisingly, betraying further functions that coalesce later—women become wicked stepmothers out of fairy tales, dead men are resurrected, changeling children are restored to their natural parents, sleeping beauties awaken, graves yawn and reveal their hideous secrets.

Perhaps most important in the metamorphic pattern are the metamorphoses of Lew Archer. He discovers that he is changing into the people whose pasts he explores; his compassion draws him into the weary retracing of their previous existence, into re-creating the events that made them what they are. In many books he recognizes and articulates the curious process of the past's effect on him and his cases. In *The Instant Enemy* he sees in a Klee painting an image of his own investigation: "It showed a man in a geometrical maze, and seemed to show that the man and the maze were continuous with each other." In *The Chill* he recognizes the dual nature of time and its importance for his profession; he reads first about Zeno's paradox of the infinite divisibility of space, then about Heraclitus: "All things flow like a river, he said; nothing abides. Parmenides, on the other hand, believed that nothing ever changed, it only seemed to. Both views appealed to me." The books prove the validity of both views. For Archer time has gone, the plots he investigates backward and downward are already completed, but their recurrence engages the whole of his personality and intelligence: time for him is cyclical, repetitive and changeless.

As other people's pasts and plots metamorphose into Archer's, he becomes a participant in the sequence of events, its victim, even its perpetrator. The search for identity becomes his own search; he remembers himself as a lost child, or a young man about to go wrong. (It may be somewhat irreverent here, but Archer's preoccupation with the Oedipal pattern and his tortuous quests for identity may indicate that he himself is of dubious paternity. There are enough allusions to *The Maltese Falcon* in the novels to imply that Lew is the illegitimate son of Sam Spade and Iva Archer, which may also explain Iva's desperation in Hammett's book.) Archer's sympathy becomes an imaginative identification, his reconstruction an immersion in another self. He often arrives at the solution of the problem—*his* problem now—by some flash of irrational and illogical thought, by intuition or dream. In one book he describes this process as "having a Gestalt." In *The Goodbye Look* he has the delusion that he is the young man he is trying to help: "I dreamed that I was Nick and Mrs. Shepherd was my grandmother who used to live with birds in Contra Costa County." He awakens from the dream with the solution to the case, bringing together a mosaic of plots. The dream explains both what really matters about the plots and their curiously static nature. The events and people of long ago are not as important as their configuration, the shape they assume, their relationships with one another. After this particular dream, all relationships untangle and explain themselves, and the dream is projected for everyone in some 20-year-old home movies in which all the characters appear. In *The Goodbye Look*, incidentally, Archer's metamorphosis is so complete that he sleeps with the woman the murderer had loved many years before, thus becoming both victim and murderer.

The dreamlike intuition that ensues from the metamorphic pattern leads inevitably to the climactic revelation of the true identities, the true actions, the real murderers in the novels. Everything

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has come full circle and no more plots seem possible. We are left instead with a generalized guilt, perhaps more guilt than seems necessary, possible or endurable. The configuration of relationships, bloody, nightmarish and complex, generates sorrow and remorse in everyone, always including Archer and the reader. Lew Archer's final actions constitute the fourth and the final plot, the result of the three that he has experienced. What he discovers and recounts is The Mythic Plot, encompassing all others and simultaneously transforming them into another version of reality. Archer's subtle and complex functions of detective, participant and man of sorrows coalesce in the final plot, not so much a series of actions as a single act.

The single act, closely related to dream, is the act of memory. Lew Archer remembers; he tells us in the book. In the remembering and the telling, he brings together the fragmented past and the disordered present, using the configuration he has discovered to explain the reality he has seen. The telling, of course, occurs after the book's events are completed and all plots now belong to the past. In the recollection and narration Archer integrates the various levels of time, reveals the truth, reconciles discordant elements, redeems some portion of suffering. He takes a multiple and dismembered series of unrelated actions, discrete units of the past, and a set of unrelated characters, and joins them all together in a unified and harmonious shape—he re-members them.

The remembering and re-membering confer upon the novels the richness of the mythic plot, which has been submerged under all activities and now emerges in retrospect. We now see how Archer's contemplation of the palimpsest of human action yields our realization that the plot is the theme of all the novels. We now can see how the allusions to myth and literature, fairy tale and folklore emphasize the universality of the specific actions and people of the books. We see why *The Goodbye Look*, for example, alternates between two explicitly repeated creation myths—Adam and Eve in the garden and Pandora's box: they provide the universal mythic plot, which states that all men are guilty because of some terrible aboriginal calamity—all men, not just the characters in the book. The mythic plot explains why Ross Macdonald, like Dickens or Faulkner, is so fond of coincidence and ironic complication. The terribly complex human relationships that he demonstrates sooner or later involve everyone. Through blood or sex or guilt or chance, we are all related, all part of the universal configuration. We now know why the Oedipal patterns recur—many of us are parents, after all, and all of us have been children. We all, therefore, suffer the guilt that the novels generate; we know that if Lew Archer had sufficient time and space he would draw us all in and find us all out, somehow, someway. And we would accept the configuration, because the mythic plot forces us to recognize it as the pattern of our own dreams, delusions and nightmares as well as the dreams, delusions and nightmares of the race.

At the risk of seeming laboriously obvious, it may be appropriate to conclude with some of the thematic statements that Ross Macdonald's plots express. All men are guilty and all human actions are connected. The past is never past. The child is father to the man. True reality resides in dreams. And most of all, everyone gets what he deserves, but no one deserves what he gets.

George Grella

George Grella is professor of English, University of Rochester.

Murder She Says

Agatha Christie

Agatha Christie is an industry that was once an art. By this I do not mean to belittle the importance of Dame Agatha's manufacturing aspect; she is, after all, not only a "C.B.E.," but a "Ltd. Co." We shall proceed, in fact, according to the Brechtian chronology *"Erst das Fressen, und dann die Moral,"* which is not so different from the order of a detective story, after all. First the business and then the art. Agatha Christie is a name for 55 years of unbroken production and constantly rising profits: over 80 novels; numberless short stories; 13 movies (if we include *Murder Ahoy*, a Miss Marple written by M.G.M.); and 17 plays, one of which, *The Mousetrap*, is still running at London's Ambassadors Theater after having opened in 1952, exhausting all endurance records everywhere, as well as three sets of furniture and generations of actors. A statistical survey published in the 1960s showed she was England's second most-translated author, ranking only after Shakespeare. She is probably actually read by more people than Shakespeare; recent estimates putting her readership in excess of 350 million.

She has said of herself that she is "a sausage machine, a perfect sausage machine!" It should be added that she is more like General Foods than the neighborhood manufactory, since her products are not only numerous but marketed under different labels. She has several detectives, as well as *noms de ratiocination*, each corresponding to a different kind of bologna.

Best known of the detectives, of course, is Hercule Poirot, who appeared in Dame Agatha's first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, which was rejected by several hapless publishers before being accepted by John Lane in 1920. It was published in 2000 copies and earned for its author £25. Forty-one novels and a different publisher (Dodd, Mead) later, the paperback rights alone of the latest Poirot have been purchased for a near record $925,000. This novel is now appearing serially in *Ladies Home Journal* and has several claims to attention beyond the mercantile. It is called *Curtain*, because it is Poirot's final appearance, and on the basis of the initial installment in the July issue, this last Poirot promises to be the first good Poirot for a long time: which is not surprising since it was written during what all her admirers now concur in recognizing as the great period, from the late 1930s to the late 1940s. The existence of the manuscript has been known for years. The book was not intended for publication until after Dame Agatha's death, the proceeds from its sale then to go to her husband of many years, the distinguished archeologist of Nimrud, Max E. L. Mallowan.

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Why it has now been released is not clear since Dame Agatha is still happily with us in her 85th year, still presumably taking those long soaks in the great Victorian bathtub of Greenway House, munching Devon apples and pondering the next "Christie for Christmas." The *Journal's* glib assurance that "Miss Christie did not intend it to be published until after her death, but the successful movie version of *Orient Express* changed her mind," is quite unconvincing. It is more likely that Dame Agatha has given herself a pleasure she's long anticipated and done what legions of criminals failed to accomplish: she's finally gotten rid of Poirot. Like Conan Doyle she grew tired of her hero years ago and *Curtain* is her version of the "final solution."

Curtain is rung down at Styles, where Poirot solved his first case in England, after having retired from the Belgian police in 1904. Col. Hastings, the stupid Watson figure who also made his appearance in Dame Agatha's first novel, is back again after having long ago been banished by his creator to Argentina. There are several other parallels with *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*. Thus this last novel is quite literally a return to the scene of the first crime, making out of the whole Poirot saga a self-conscious recapitulation of the classical detective story plot in which the conclusion, the solution, is a rediscovery of the tale's donnée, the crime.

Dame Agatha's second best known brand name is Miss Marple, who first appeared in a book whose title reveals all that need be known about her world, *Murder at the Vicarage* (1930). Miss Marple is tall and thin—she does not look like the late Margaret Rutherford, although Agatha Christie, herself, does. Miss Marple lives in the village of St. Mary Mead and is as much a caricature of the English gentlewoman as Poirot is a lampoon of the impossible foreigner. She tends to solve murders by virtue of the arcane knowledge only ladies of her age and station still have: nursery rhymes taught by Edwardian governesses or the "meanings" of flowers and herbs ("A yellow tulip means hopeless love"). If Poirot is chiefly remarkable for his logic, she is memorable for a common sensicalness that verges in its implacability on metaphysics. The message of the stories in which she appears is always the same: the great heart of darkness beats under the quaint surface rhythms of a village church social no less ineluctably than at the headwaters of jungle rivers.

Dame Agatha's other detectives need not long detain us. Mr. Satherwaite who is "featured" in the *Mysterious Mr. Quin* (1930) short stories and the *Mr. Parker Pyne* (1934) short stories is easily forgotten. Not, unfortunately, so quickly repressed are the dreadful Tommy and Tuppence Beresford, the young things (even in their current dotage) who first appeared in *The Secret Adversary* (1922) and are still with us. Their charm might be described as brittle were it not so militant; their progress is that of siege tower, covered in ivy and trickled out in good taste, but for all that no less relentless. Somewhat more bearable is Dame Agatha's tart alter ego Mrs. Ariadne (get it?) Oliver, author of detective stories, who appears in several Christie novels in some of which she is not only the knowing chorus but agent of solution as well, as in for instance, 1961's *The Pale Horse*.

If the various detectives she has fielded may serve as one system for discriminating among the manifold products of this so English *Wurstfabrik*, Dame Agatha's various names constitute another. If Poirot is the top and the Beresfords the bottom in the former hierarchy, in the latter Agatha Christie—derived from her first marriage to Col. Archibald Christie—is at the zenith and the nadir is called "Mary Westmacott." The names are less reliable than the detectives, however, since the vile poetry (*Poems*, 1973) has been published under "Agatha Christie." They include a 1924 masque as well as such recent lucubrations as "What is Love?" You will perhaps not be surprised to learn that it is—among other things—a flame as well as a fire, to say nothing of a tree and a cathedral spire. Once so much has been admitted, it should be added that most of the sawdust-stuffed sausages bear a less deceptive label. The straight, or romantic as they are sometimes called, novels (approximately five of these) have been published under "Mary Westmacott," Dame Agatha's maiden name, which strikes one as overwhelmingly apt when lost in the virginal excesses of such a work as *Giant's Bread* (1930): "He was dancing with her. Never had he imagined he could be so happy. She was like a feather, a rose leaf in his arms. She was wearing a pink dress again . . . it floated all around her. If life could only go on like this forever . . ." Under "Agatha Christie Mallowan" she has published children's stories and a partial autobiography, *Come, Tell Me How You Live* (1946).

Not every Agatha Christie is in fact an Agatha Christie. Here, then, is a minimal list of those texts which for one reason or another do define Dame Agatha's very real achievement:

- 1920: *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*. Her first novel; the first Poirot; a good read, it also sets up all the conventions, including "the little grey cells," which according to G.C. Ramsey (1967) "has been adopted by an African tribe to indicate their brain."
- 1926: *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. A very good read in its own right, but which also played a historical role in establishing the formula of the classical detective story because it violated one of the most sacred, but up till 1926 still uncanonized requirements: the murderer must not be a first-person narrator, much less the detective's Watson for the nonce. The importance of this novel as a metaphor for the whole genre was confirmed when Edmund Wilson chose in 1944 to call the most damning of his three attacks on detective stories, "Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?" [Republished in *Classics and Commercials*, 1950]
- 1930: *Murder at the Vicarage*. First appearance of Miss Marple.
- 1934: *Anno mirabile*. Not only the traditional Christmas gift, but three

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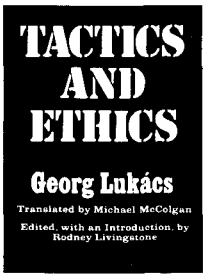

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other books as well, including *Murder on the Orient Express*. This novel must not, by the way, be confused with *Mystery of the Blue Train* (1928), by general consent a failure and Dame Agatha's own candidate for her worst.

• 1936: *Murder in Mesopotamia*. One of the classics based on the experience gained while its author was on archeological digs with her husband. See also *Death on the Nile* (1937) and *Appointment with Death* (1938).

• 1939: *Ten Little Niggers* has at least three American titles that seek to avoid the original English one, all recognizable except *And Then There Were None*. One of the unrepeatable masterpieces: everyone is a victim.

• 1940: *The Patriotic Murders* (in America *Overdose of Death*). Strong sample of typical Poirot.

• 1941: *Murder in Retrospect*. Possibly the only successful entry in the genre of old crimes reconstructed, if we discount the more hilarious attempts to complete Drood or reshuffle Marie Roget.

•1944: *Death Comes as the End*. Miss Marple's contention is that human nature is always and everywhere the same. This is Dame Agatha's most sustained evidence of her belief in the same proposition: the old story, but set in Egypt's Middle Kingdom (3000 BC).

• 1946: *The Hollow* (in America *Murder After Hours*). Especially good Poirot, one of the last.

• 1952: *The Mousetrap*. The longest running play anywhere; always good fun but 1948's *Witness for the Prosecution* (1956 Laughton/Dietrich film) even better.

• 1975: *Curtain*. The final solution.

In conclusion a few words about the art of Agatha Christie—what is it that the list above defines? In 1928 Raymond Chandler wrote to Blanche Knopf, "I am one of the few . . . people moderately literate who take the detective story seriously . . . Some day somebody's going to make 'literature' of it . . ." But just the opposite has happened: the detective story is taken seriously by increasing numbers of people precisely because it is *not* literary. Millions consume Christies because they are the closest thing to the tale our century has to offer and she is excluded from literature for the same reasons as *The Arabian Nights* or the *Brothers Grimm* Her stories do not correspond to the dominant expectations of the academy, which still uses as its norm for "literary" narrative the 19th-century novel with its emphasis on psychological depth and organic plot. The truck drivers and diner waitresses who read Agatha Christie knew from the start her books had only the physical appearance of novels, that they in fact contained stories with all the mechanical tricks and obsession with formula that has always characterized the good tale.

But it is only recently that the professors have discovered this. It was precisely those formalists and structuralists who cut their theoretical teeth on Propp's study of fairy tales who have recently been using detective stories as their privileged example for narrative analysis. For Robbe-Grillet, it is not the status of such stories, but "literature" itself that has been put into question.

The revolution in narrative theory that's been going on since the 1920s has given the much deplored flatness of the detective story a new dimension: as Oscar Wilde joked and Giles Deleuze has philosophized, there is nothing more profound than surface, or as Dupin himself says in "The Purloined Letter," "Perhaps the mystery is a little *too* plain." The detective story's sketchy characters, its narrow settings, its rejection of mimesis in the service of structure all reveal themselves now as a quite proper—and sophisticated—lust to know its own discourse. Ferdinand de Saussure's favorite metaphor for language was the game of chess, and it is by no means a coincidence that the first detective story, "Murders in the Rue Morgue," begins with a long meditation on the relative virtues of draughts versus chess.

There's a famous bit of Sherlockisimus that goes, "I would call your attention to the curious incident of the dog in the nighttime." Watson says, "The dog did nothing in the nighttime," and Holmes answers — gloriously — "That was the curious incident." What we have here is a lesson from the master about the nature of detective stories: nothing really happens, but it is all therefore curious. They are only "about" themselves, their omega is never more than their own slightly, but significantly, altered alpha.

Agatha Christie is an industry that was once an art, all right, but not the art sought by the literary and self-conscious Dorothy Sayers, nor even that which Steven Marcus or Geoffrey Hartman attribute to the Continental Ops and Lew Archers of the world. Agatha Christie's art, the art of the classical detective story (Dupin, Holmes, Poirot) consists of an austere, minimalist purity of narrative in which the story is the discovery of its own plot. Thus Agatha Christie should not be compared to Dickens or Thackeray, nor even to those academic or hard-boiled writers of detective stories who seek to hybridize the genre by using novelistic elements. She should rather be compared to those other masters of making something out of nothing, such as Lewis Carroll or P.G. Wodehouse, who have done for plot what the great novelists did for character. And perhaps something more, for as Roland Barthes has said of detective stories, "Suspense is . . . a way of gambling with structure, with the ultimate goal, as it were, to risk and glorify the structure. Suspense is the intelligible made problematic . . . by representing order in its fragility, it achieves the very idea of language."

Michael Holquist

Michael Holquist is associate professor of Slavic languages and literature at Yale.

Key Witness

J. D. MacDonald

I don't think this power was entirely a matter of violence, although far too many people got killed in these stories . . . Possibly it was the smell of fear which these stories managed to generate.

—The Midnight Raymond Chandler.

In 1962, with the publication of two of his finest novels, *A Key to the Suite* and *A Flash of Green*, John Dann MacDonald had reached a literary crossroads. Just 46 years old, in a little less than two decades he had written over 40 novels (some serious, some not so serious, some pure potboilers) and 500 magazine short stories; 20 million copies of his books had been sold, many translated into a dozen foreign languages.

And still a Simon & Schuster news profile in the early '60s could label him as "The Most Widely Unknown Best-Selling Author in the World." Ian Fleming, Mickey Spillane, even Ross

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Macdonald, his pseudonymous namesake, had become household words, but who had ever heard of John D. MacDonald? Moreover as he explained in his article, "How to live with a Hero,"". . . it became apparent to me that the market for my work was changing. The reduced number of magazines published less fiction. Small book sales on newstands were being diminished. . . ."

One solution could be to create a hero in a suspense series, perhaps along the lines of a Phillip Marlowe, the only past protagonist considered by MacDonald to be "of a stature and dimension which approached valid novelistic standards." The idea for such a series had first been suggested by his agent and also his editor at Fawcett back in 1950, when he had published his first novel, *The Brass Cupcake*. He had resisted the idea then, feeling it premature; he wanted more experience writing, more freedom experimenting with different forms, different problems, before locking himself into a series.

Yet now after having written such different and outstanding suspense novels as *Dead Low Tide* (1953), *Area of Suspicion* (1954), *April Eve* (1955), *The Empty Trap* (1957), *Slam the Big Door* (1960), *End of the Night* (1960) and *Where is Janice Gantry* (1961), John D. MacDonald felt ready to take the plunge. By the middle of 1963 he had produced three drafts of what would become the first Travis McGee novel. *The Deep Blue Good-By* (1964). Cautious and energetic, reluctant to release his hero without further tests, MacDonald proceeded to write the next four adventures of the series, *Nightmare in Pink* (1964), *A Purple Place for Dying* (1964), *The Quick Red Fox* (1964) and *A Deadly Shade of Gold* (1965). Thus prior to publication of his first McGee novel, the painstaking author had written a staggering million and a quarter words about his heroic counterpart to Spade, Marlowe and Archer.

McGee as Hero contains elements of all three predecessors: he has the hint of meanness and suggestion of illegality that made Sam Spade such a fascinatingly ambiguous character; he has Marlowe's sense of self-directed irony, his striking physical presence, and though more open to sensual experience, he shares in main his moral outlook; and finally he has Lew Archer's sensitivity and interest in others, a willingness to get involved with people, probably more involved than Archer himself.

Yet if McGee's character relates in part to an illustrious tradition, much of

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his personality as well as the basic ingredients of the novels must be traced to MacDonald's earlier suspense novels. And the rest of the figure of Travis to the writer's conception of a romantic hero:

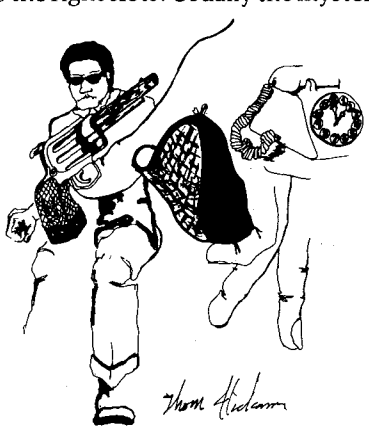
> *I made shameless use of certain conventions: a variation of the Robin Hood modus operandi; a houseboat environment, a tropic resort flavor, a capacity for indignation. I discarded other conventions I find restrictive and boring—for example, the idea that the hero must always win. I made him an iconoclast, a critic of the cheapening aspects of his culture, an unassimilated rebel in an increasingly structured society. I gave him a light, wry, amiable touch, partially obscuring the areas of doubt all men have.* ("How to live with a Hero")

Thus we have Travis McGee, a rebel with many causes, and a gifted narrator with a sense of irony:

> *I get this crazy feeling . . . this is the last time in history when the offbeats like me will have a chance to live free in the nooks and crannies of the huge and rigid structure of an increasingly codified society. Fifty years from now I would be hunted down in the streets. They would drill little holes in my skull and make me sensible and adjusted. . . . I am to put it as bitterly as possible, a romantic. I know a windmill when I see one, by God, and I sneer at my white horse. (The Quick Red Fox)*

Sixteen Travis McGee novels have appeared since their debut in 1964. The first several years MacDonald continued to do other writing as well. His most prolific year was 1967-68, when in addition to three McGee novels, he wrote a masterful suspense thriller, *The Last One Left*, and a nonfictional study of the Coppolino murder trial, *No Deadly Drug*, in which F. Lee Bailey seems to take on some of the curious coloration of McGee himself. More recently John D. has slowed down to the pace of a normally active writer, producing one McGee novel per year, the last several published first in hardback (contrary to his soft cover tradition). Number 16, *The Dreadful Lemon Sky*, is currently high on the best seller list, final proof (if such were needed) that Travis and his author have made it.

The basic plot of a McGee adventure usually begins with the interaction of a girl (either an old friend or friend of a friend or kin to one) in trouble, and a large sum of money (missing, stolen or buried). Travis swallows the bait and sets off on his mission of rescue, either by land (in Miss Agnes, his faithful Rolls pick-up truck), or by sea (in the Busted Flush, his elegant houseboat that he won in a poker game from a Brazilian playboy). Usually he is accompanied by Meyer, the hairy and brainy economist-cum-pal also living in quasi-retirement on a houseboat (in Bahia Mar, Fort Lauderdale, Florida). Meyer rarely has a major role in the subsequent action (the major exception to this being *The Long Lavender Look* [1970] where his role is vital), serving instead as a useful convention, the idiosyncratic buddy, a bright Watson to McGee's earthy Holmes. McGee, like the Hemingway hero, is someone to whom things happen, and who also manages to make things happen. Once he has supplied sufficient pressure, the local scene explodes, and Travis then fits the pieces into the right slots. Usually the mystery-



adventure involves a gang of con artists of one sort or another: smuggling, thievery, bamboozling, all types of chicanery. Rarely are we ever confronted with murder just for murder's sake: the profit motive is writ large in John D. MacDonald's world, as is only fitting of a novelist with an M.A. from the Harvard Business School.

Travis tracks down the gang through a tenacious process of elimination (usually literal); he somehow survives a grotesque assortment of killings and general mayhem, although his friends often aren't as lucky. The climax of the novels involves a ferocious mano-a-mano between Travis and the killer, invariably an upwardly mobile sadistic psycopath. In this struggle, Travis is almost killed, but recovers amazingly (lucky breaks seem to fall his way), gains the upper hand, relaxes (stupidly) and, then is attacked once again by his now totally crazed adversary, who gets a death grip on McGee, but never manages to consummate the act. Usually he ends up killing himself while trying to escape (thus saving Travis the responsibility for his death).

The closing scene usually finds Travis returning to the Busted Flush for some badly needed R & R with a playmate in tow (if she has survived the above carnage). If not, sometimes a playmate from an earlier tale will pop in to console McGee. Or at worst there is always the amusing comradery of the sympatico Meyer.

The success of this formula over the span of 16 books is due to more than simplicity. One obvious factor is the characterization of Travis McGee: a bundle of contradictions, brutal yet likable, fairly honest, with a Marlovian sense of humor and honor. Another ingredient is MacDonald's peculiar genius in creating with several swift sure strokes highly believable and interesting subsidiary characters, who take on a real life of their own and interreact convincingly with Travis, whether for him or against him. Perhaps John D. had subconsciously registered the complaint in Edmund Wilson's essay on "Why do People Read Detective Stories?" (1944):

> *. . . you cannot become interested in the characters, because they never can be allowed an existence of their own even in a flat two dimensions but have always to be contrived so that they can seem either reliable or sinister, depending on which quarter, at the moment, is to be baited for the reader's suspicion.*

MacDonald displays equal skill in creating fascinating vignettes of the towns and cities where these adventures take place (often sociological documents in their own right), and equally interesting details concerning whichever con is being played, from stamp collecting (*The Scarlet Ruse*, 1973) to the old badger game (*Darker Than Amber*, 1966) played for deadly stakes, to pornographic blackmailing in Hollywood (*The Quick Red Fox*). Finally there is the writer's Poeish knack for creating an atmosphere of elemental nightmarish terror, in generating the "smell of fear," as Chandler put it in discussing the *Black Mask* writers, a magazine for which MacDonald wrote several short stories.

This smell of fear relates directly to MacDonald's ability to create believable characters with whom we can identify as victims and equally convincing and frightening villains. Although Travis himself is as indestructible as most mythic heroes, we realize that his

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friends are less immortal. Often we meet them first after they have already been victimized, and are fully aware of how much they have suffered, and how cruel and destructive any further suffering would be. We are therefore almost as psychologically vulnerable as they are themselves to the idea of further pain, and we cringe when such violence recurs. In *Bright Orange For the Shroud* (1965), Vivian Watts is raped by the animalistic yet shrewd Boone Waxwell. She is ravaged not only sexually, but also psychically, a cruel abasement that leaves her no choice but suicide.

The McGee novels (and in fact almost everything written by MacDonald) are morality plays: Travis engaged in an endless struggle on behalf of defenseless victims, a force of Good against the multifarious Evil rampant in our harsh society. Though protean in their form the MacDonald villain is generally greedy, sexually twisted and amoral; in short, a sociopath, total madness only a flicker away. MacDonald's moral vision is conservative and manichean: McGee strives to preserve traditional values which he honors as an act of social good.

Yet in some of the recent novels one senses a certain ennui creeping into Travis' soul. He seems to be more remote with his friends, his women, even his enemies. In *The Dreadful Lemon Sky*, he turns down Carrie Milligan's offer of herself for no apparent reason except indifference; he remains strangely distant with Cindy Birdsong, in spite of himself; he can't make up his mind whether the clearly amoral Freddy Van Harn is really such a bad guy; and finally when his cop colleague, gutsy Captain Harry Max Scorf, has his head blown off by Hascomb, McGee uses Hascomb's moment of stunned "incredulous horror" to win the shootout, but then passes over Captain Harry's death without even a word of tribute.

Perhaps Travis and John D. both need a vacation, a time for McGee to savor his putative retirement, and a chance for MacDonald to work on a different type of novel for a while, to freshen his extraordinary narrative gifts. One remembers McGee's lament early in *The Dreadful Lemon Sky*, that his favorite Plymouth gin is no longer bottled in England: ". . . it isn't the same. It's still a pretty good gin, but it is not a superb, stingling dry, and lovely gin."

David A. Benjamin

David A. Benjamin is the Princeton tennis coach.

It's Chinatown

James M. Cain

If you have the courage, take a look this summer at James M. Cain. Courage is needed because of an entire generation of tough-guy writers—Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, B. Traven, Horace McCoy and others of the Southern California school—James M. Cain is possessed of the most brutal, elemental, and intrinsically pessimistic view of human events and possibilities. Only another Californian, Robinson Jeffers, working up the coast at Big Sur and in another genre, narrative poetry, matches Cain's abysmal bleakness.

Something happened in Southern California during the 1930s. Some new vision of evil rushed in upon the American consciousness. Roman Polanski has of late caught that '30s feeling of moral depravity and impending doom in the film *Chinatown:* a sense of brooding evil abiding just beneath the movietone surface of Southern California life: the stucco neo-Spanish bungalows, the too exotic gardens where vegetation rioted in a cancer of fecundity, the sunshine mocking the defeated hopes of Midwesterners in sport clothes who were angry with themselves and with Southern California because what they had come for was not there. In Los Angeles during these years death seemed everywhere; and a mood of excess and disaster, strange and sinister, like flowers rotting from too much sunshine, pervaded the city.

It was a demicivilization of expatriates, and James M. Cain was part of it, brought there, like Fitzgerald and Faulkner, to write for the movies. Cain brought to Hollywood a melange of already defeated aspirations. He was pushing 40 and as of yet had not fully taken hold of anything. His career in journalism, while bringing him associations with Walter Lippmann at the *New York World*, H.L. Mencken at *The American Mercury* and Harold Ross at *The New Yorker*, had been, in the final analysis as he approached middle age, fragmented and inconclusive. He was on the way to becoming just another hard-drinking Irish-American journalist with baffled aspirations in the direction of literature. As a production writer working on the Hollywood assembly line, he was too stubborn, too touchy regarding his integrity, to do anyone much good. Yet Cain looked around himself, noted what he saw, and in 1934, after more than a decade of trying to write fiction, published *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, one of the finest moments of depression literature. *Serenade*, a tale of art, homosexuality and ritualized lust, followed in 1937; and *Mildred Pierce* in 1941, produced as a movie in 1945, one of the finest ever made. In 1969 Knopf brought out *Cain X 3*, containing *The Postman Always Rings Twice, Mildred Pierce* and *Double Indemnity;* and having perhaps the most sassy introduction on record, by Tom Wolfe.

Cain X 3 is the Cain you are encouraged to dip into this summer as, in the mountains, by the beach or by the poolside between sips of gin and tonics and banana daiquiris, you have the sudden flash, if you are lucky, that behind the entire technological *tableau* of our mass society remain—and are more than occasionally acted upon—clusters of greed, lust and sordid ambition seething behind the banal surfaces of the American present.

Cain's characters exist in a world at once ancient and new: a dawn-world of sins existing prior to myth or theology, articulated through the bric-a-brac and motivations which we only admitted to ourselves in the movies of the 1930s: the Buick sedans, the Chesterfield cigarettes, the novelty ash trays, the executive inter-com, the gin rickeys, the slit nostrils, the bashed skulls. Polanski paid attention to these details because he knew in retrospect that they were the signs and symbols, the scarlet letters and white whales of a society whose money and morals had lost coherence.

Cain wastes no words giving us these things. The writer who balked at being a studio hack introduced and perfected what Edmund Wilson called the cinematic novel, the novel written as film rather than as literature. A Cain story rushes forward with the headlong pace of a writer who has left everything save narrative on the cutting room floor. Yet we put Cain down with a conviction of social density and accomplished experience; for he triggers in us an act of imaginative cooperation. Convinced that Cain's fables of lust, murder and money are true to the epistructure of life in the urban-industrial complex, the reader amplifies and visualizes the details, like a director working from the bare bones of a story line: visualizing this or that parking lot, giving this or that character the face of Joan Crawford, Barbara Stanwyck, or John Gar-

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field. Hollywood transformed Cain's cinematic narratives into great movies, and the movies in turn conferred upon the Cain canon a more ample and substantial life than it would have had on its own. Reading Cain, then, is a mixed media event, to which you bring the subliminal apparatus and ionization trail of whatever hours you have spent wisely or not too wisely at matinees or before the leperous white light of the late show.

For all his longevity (he was born in 1892 and published his most recent novel *Rainbow's End* this year) Cain is primarily a writer of the 1930s and the 1940s. Cain's *The Magician's Wife* (1965), for instance, suffers from an element of time displacement, the characters moving and acting in a psychological calculation outside of anything having to do with the 1960s, either as a matter of motivation or ambience.

But then again all of Cain's best work has an element of laconic timelessness. The depression addicted certain writers to ideology. Many of them wrote great—and talky—novels. Writers like Cain, Chandler, Hammett and McCoy went in the opposite direction. Rather than explicitly analyze the breakdown of the machinery of the *polis*, they funded the anxieties of the collapse into moments of pure experience: moments that existed beyond the consolations of style, thought or symbol. Here, they said, face it straight and draw your own conclusions. Cain and the others did this partly because, possessed of solid commercial instincts, they knew that unadorned sex and violence had been on the bestseller list since the Bible and the Greeks. But they did it this way also because they realized that, in rendering what was evil and tragic in human affairs, it was often better to keep your mouth shut because most of what you would be saying was not what you meant at all, not what you meant at all. They turned themselves into tough guys because that seemed the best moral and esthetic posture with which to face a time of collapse and lost meaning.

This terse defiance in the face of pain and self-defeat attracted French existentialists. As in the case of Faulkner, Jean Paul Sartre was the first critic to take Cain seriously. The parallels between *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and Camus' *The Stranger* are apparent and acknowledged. We are now in the midst of a 1930s revival because we of the 1970s also live After the Crash. We have seen the machinery collapse. We have recognized what Cain and other writers of Southern Californian expatriation told us: that we were kidding ourselves if we thought that it was anything else but primitive, in a roadside hash-house where a 24-year-old drifter screws a waitress and bashes in the skull of an old Greek with a monkey wrench, or in the White House of late where the crimes did not even possess the saving grace of elementality, where lust would have been a blessing. Cain tells us that demons are within us, individually as we covet and destroy, collectively as we destroy and covet.

Kevin Starr

Kevin Starr is City Librarian of San Francisco and author of *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915 (Oxford University Press).*

The Back of the Book

S.S. Van Dine

Recognition of my transcendent genius, I see, is destined to be posthumous.
—The Canary Murder Case

Philo Vance returned to New York from a trip to Egypt in the summer of 1936. He had "thrown himself into Egyptological research," in order to forget the lovely Zalia Graem of *The Garden Murder Case*, and now, understandably, was near exhaustion. Starting in 1926 he already had solved the *Benson, Canary, Greene, Bishop, Scarab, Kennel, Dragon* and *Casino* murder cases and was about to dig into the *Kidnap*. (The *Winter* and *Gracie Allen* [*sic*] murder cases were yet to come.) His friend and narrator, S.S. Van Dine, feared for Vance's health, but it was only "a short time before I recognized the old vital Vance that I had always known, keen for sports, for various impersonal activities, and for the constant millings of the undercurrents of human psychology." The confident silliness of that description gives us Vance and Van Dine in a shot.

Vance's manner of talking was more vivid than Van Dine's, but no less preposterous—"I'm in a perfect Erebus of tenebrosity." What Van Dine consigned to pseudo-scholarly footnotes, Vance said aloud. More show-off than pedant, he disguised his mockery of others in self-parody, which became ludicrous itself when tied by Van Dine to Vance's supposed deep nature. Van Dine wanted us to believe that Vance was more mysterious than the murders he dealt with; but good detectives, including Sherlock Holmes, cannot hold us by their characters. The most interesting thing about Vance was money.

He was the most popular American detective of the depression: because he wore a silk kimono, because he usually slept till noon, because he languished in dreams of dead European civilizations, because he could be "cheered by a fillet of sole Marguéry," because he had no interest in social justice ("really y'know, I'm no avenger of society, but I do detest an unsolved problem"), because next to art, porcelain, Chinese bronzes and Scottish terriers, nothing meant so much to him as manners. *The Benson Murder Case* (1926) sold out its first week. Eleven movies (starring nine separate Vances, including William Powell, Warren William and Basil Rathbone) were based on the books. An ice-cream sundae was called the "Canary." Ogden Nash said that Vance needed a kick in the pance.

S.S. Van Dine was the pen name of Willard Huntington Wright (1888-1939), a loosely educated journalist who worked on the *Los Angeles Times* and edited *The Smart Set* in 1913. Wright wrote an autobiographical novel, *The Man of Promise* in 1916, and two thin books on art. He also wrote literary theory, *The Creative Will: Studies in the Philosophy and the Syntax of Aesthetics*, which is said to have influenced the young Faulkner. Wright's crucial year was 1923, when he had an emotional breakdown. He convalesced by reading mystery stories, literally thousands of them.

In 1929 he collected and wrote a long introduction to an anthology of *Great*

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Detective Stories (Scribners). Wright's rules for good mystery writing are interesting, but his knowledge of the growth of the detective story as a genre is extraordinary, and explains much about his creation of Vance. Clearly Vance was a deliberate invention, discovered as Dupin or Holmes often discovered criminals, through a process of elimination. He was a fusion of Holmes, Gaboriau's M. Lecoq, G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown, H. C. Bailey's Dr. Fortune, A. E. W. Mason's Hanaud, Anthony Wynne's Dr. Haily and Melville Davisson Post's Uncle Abner—the virtue common to all being a preeminence of intuitive genius over fact arrangement. Wright believed that "the cooperation extended by the reader to his favorite detective is wholly a mental process." At the same time he knew that no reader wants to be part of purely logical mental process, which would merely associate him with the bungling police.

Van Dine's great feat with Vance is that we are not permitted to like him. Chandler and Hammett, for all their self-conscious hard-boiledness, made their detectives lovable; they kicked them in the mud to win our hearts. "Down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean," said Chandler in "The Simple Art of Murder," an essay propelled by sentimentality. Van Dine on the other hand, who manufactured the "fragrant world" which Chandler condemned, where only the rich bump each other off, came much closer than Chandler to creating a truly hard-boiled egg. In *The Benson Murder Case* Vance ridicules the D.A., Markham, his close friend in front of a suspect. Neither Sam Spade, Phillip Marlowe or even the shady Ned Beaumont would have done that.

Nobody loves a man who wears a monocle. Vance is not despicable; it is merely impossible to like him actively. Unlike Holmes or Nero Wolfe he has no interesting assistant to warm the narrative. Van Dine, the family lawyer, is too pompous and corny to make Vance attractive in any sense deeper than the Abercrombie and Fitch catalogue. Vance's aloneness conveys no feeling of underlying melancholy, precisely because Van Dine is always, and deliberately, pushing the possibility too hard. Vance's elaborate independence from the world is in fact reassuring; we don't worry for his mental health between cases. Even the love touch of *The Garden Murder Case* is just a touch.

His solitariness is essential to these stories, nevertheless, because over half the murders occur in families: brothers knife brothers; children poison parents. Like the Greeks, Van Dine knew that families are dangerous. Vance stands outside both the story and the institution of the family, which he implicitly criticizes. He is the most important person in the story—he puts it in order by solving the crime—but he is also free of the participants, free of connections. By ending the mystery, he restores his bachelorhood.

Like other detectives, Vance imposes order on disorganized events. His loneliness is also like a god's, whose sense of order is higher than and hidden from that of ordinary people. Vance is rich but no conservative; he creates his own systems. As the only one on the case with the power to make his system work, he is relied upon by others. Yet he does not give his sense of order to anyone for future use, certainly not to the police who must start from scratch at every murder.

He stands outside the law as well, openly contemptuous and covertly supportive, in the American way. He does not think the law is evil or unnecessary, merely beside most points: "No. Legal technicalities quite useless in such an emergency. Deeper issues involved. Human issues, d'ye see." He is so confident in his knowledge of human issues that he refers to these murders as "unnatural" and "grotesque" because they jostle his theories of behavior. Vance's idea of justice is purely poetic. More often than not he allows the culprit to cheat the State.

Of course it is not his capability for organization that we seek in these stories, but the assurance, in the distance, that that capability exists. What we wish for and indulge in, here and in all mysteries, is the thrill of unknowing, unknowing who the murderer is, and particularly who is going to get it next. By using devices which keep Vance unlikable, Van Dine extended this thrill to fine lengths, without stalling. Vance's knowledge of fish or rare coins is always pertinent to the crimes. His foppish presentation of information makes us as impatient as Markham, but like Markham we hear him out on the suspicion that the information will be valuable, and allow us to beat both Markham and Vance to the killer.

This is a set up, in fact, because Van Dine's killers are not detectable by information alone: "The material indications of the crime don't enter into my calculations. . . . I have other, and surer, ways of reaching conclusions." The detective tells us outright in every story that he will expose the guilty person by determining temperament and likely action in given circumstances. From then on, however, he piles on motives and clues, non irrelevant, and gulls us into using deduction as a method; in effect, he turns us into Markhams. He meanwhile remains psychological, which is what any logician in his right mind would prefer to be. While we struggle with chess moves (the *Bishop*) and lines of trajectory (the *Benson*), he announces (usually with a third of the novel to go) that he already knows who the murderer is—indeed that he has known for some time—but needs to slum in facts in order to prove it. Thus at the end we concentrate almost totally on Vance, which allows the suspects to dwindle down to a precious few (two in the *Greene*) without our being certain about the murderer.

Van Dine's other diversionary tactic is his precison with details. He loved maps and diagrams, and insisted on telling us all the street routes taken. Superficially realistic, this is a wildly romantic touch; it presents an imaginary New York, like Fitzgerald's in *Gatsby*, with great pastoral space and elegant silences. It also tightens suspense; the layouts of vast apartments and brownstones make vivid both the scenes of the crimes and the crimes themselves. This is the fancy stuff of which Chandler disapproved in the name of realism, but again Chandler missed the point. Van Dine's details are not meant to divert us from the reality of the world (which is no more accurately captured by describing sheets in a whorehouse), but from the identity of the killer.

In the infamous "Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?" Edmund Wilson said that "the reading of detective stories is simply a kind of vice that, for silliness and minor harmfulness, ranks somewhere between smoking and crossword puzzles." The judgment is too cute to mean anything. A crossword puzzle in fact was what Van Dine had in mind when he planned his novels, "an extended puzzle in fictional form." He was not creating fiction, but a kind of riddle.

This probably is why he went out of style as soon as Hammett, Chandler and others established themselves. Hammett and Chandler could (and did) breed imitators because they were toying with small-scale tragedy—always easier to imitate because if the crime is gripping enough, one can leave out other essen-

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tial parts of tragedy with minimum risk. Van Dine, who was working more with an architectural than literary form, was difficult to re-create or revive. Scribner tried to reissue the murders a few years ago, and got nowhere. Fawcett Publications redid the first four books in paperback, with few sales.

Yet people might be ready for Philo Vance again. For one thing, our economic state is making class differences so blatant that snobs and dandies may come back into cultural favor. For another, public interest in serious fiction is waning, and readers increasingly prefer things like riddles which free them of the understanding of other men's hearts. For a third, these stories are good—clever and intricate, expertly paced, particularly effective as summer reading, in an electric storm, when the car is gone and something seems wrong with the phone.

Roger Rosenblatt

Correspondence

Connally's Secret Trial

To the editors:

Fred Graham's article ("The Secret Trial of John Connally," *TNR*, June 21) documents the quiet complacency with which Special Prosecutor Henry S. Ruth, Jr. accepted rulings adverse to the prosecution's case that effectively withheld the trial of John Connally from public view and transformed it, unabashedly, into a travesty. The article also lends unvoiced support to a letter by Jacob S. Hurwitz (*TNR*, June 7) which challenged the images of Leon Jaworski and Ruth as national idols. Taken together, the article and letter form clear evidence that the boundless reach of Nixon extended to the acquittal of Connally.

Nixon's purpose to project for his future use as much of his diminishing power as he could was manifest in two significant appointments assuring that all fealties ran to him and were redeemable on demand. The first was Jaworski who would investigate him with all allowable tenderness. The second was Ford who, in language agreeable to Nixon, would decree his pardon. Ruth was the creature of both—Jaworski having recommended him as his successor and Ford having appointed him. To earn the job, Ruth had to first publicly state his accord with Jaworski that the pardon of Nixon was legal and would not be ruffled by the new incumbent.

Nixon's passion for Connally, the only Democrat in his cabinet, was no secret. Ford had no personal love for Connally. But an enduring obligation to Nixon prompted him to pay a goodwill visit to Connally shortly before his trial. This obliquely demonstrated his faith in him to the world at large and to those who would try him in particular—court and potential jurors. It would be artless to say Special Prosecutor Ruth did not also pick up this smoke signal from his appointor.

Bijou Schwartz
Rockville Centre, New York

To the editors:

Even before Fred Graham enlightened us about the shenanigans at the Connally trial, John Connally knew that no man ever became President of the United States by winning a close decision over Jake Jacobsen; so he is speaking softly and with restraint about his aspirations and tempering them with vague and unrealistic utterances that a conspiracy got him into his trouble. Select audiences are now giving him standing ovations and, to nourish their hopes that they have hopped aboard a lucky bandwagon, are naively willing to overlook the flaws in his makeup.

But that is not the way it will be on the hustings where he will have to meet the voters who elect Presidents. There the people will not hide their awareness that the man was acquitted only of accepting a gratuity and that he was neither tried nor acquitted of disporting with self-confessed felon Jacobsen and of lying to a federal grand jury—acts which, by his own words, the trial conclusively established he committed.

They will ask him what moved him to jackass into court the mass of unalloyed integrity composed of equal parts of Lady Bird Johnson, Billy Graham, Robert McNamara, Dean Rusk and Barbara Jordan to toast his nobility as though he were a hero at a testimonial dinner. And they will want to know whether this improbable maneuver did not convey to the jury the awesome imperative that a finding of guilt would be the equivalent of ticketing this august assemblage a pack of liars.

In their zeal to find out more of how the privileged seem so often able to overcome the law and its purposes, they might even ask him if he can account for the incredible ineptitude of the prosecution in allowing its principal witness, Jacobsen, to appear on the stand decked out like a burlesque comedian and without dark glasses to conceal two of the shiftiest eyes ever to face a jury.

They will surely want to know something about the most powerful and resounding endorsement of a man's innocence ever accorded a defendant in a criminal trial and will, therefore, ask Connally plenty of questions about the private chat he had with President Ford while he was under indictment and awaiting trial. And this could lead to touchier questions about whether, in the remote event something untoward happened at the trial, the President was prepared to use his handy tool of pardon, which was already custom-honed to a fine edge in the more complex circumstances of pardoning Nixon.

If there is a lesson in all this it is that if some of the traditional safeguards that favor defendants were relaxed in criminal trials of public servants accused of betraying their trust, blackguards and mercenaries might be deterred from seeking public office or from misbehaving while in it. If, for one example, rather than that a defendant's guilt be proved beyond a reasonable doubt, it needed simply to be proved, Connally might be now contemplating his indiscretions in the slammer instead of plotting moves to become President.

George Dreyfuss Hurwitz
Woodmere, New York

Osborne Watchers

To the editors:

Apparently John Osborne is watching the White House through a rose-colored prism. His recent articles are not incisive, critical or meaningful. Mr. Osborne is for the most part an apologist for the Ford administration at a time which demands thoughtful inquiry and analysis . . .

John Danyo
Avondale Estates, Georgia

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To the editors:

John Osborne's column has been one of the features that, over the past few years, have given *TNR* a legitimate claim to journalistic excellence.

It would be a shame if a few ideologues—who prefer comforting myth to the facts—should influence you to put the clamps on Osborne's brilliantly enlightening coverage.

W.A. Cockell, Jr.
Arlington, Virginia

Ode of Mea Culpa

To the editors:

Reading Peter J. Ognibene on Theodore White's book, *Breach of Faith*, (*TNR*, June 7) one can't help thinking that Ognibene would be happy if White began each chapter with an ode of mea culpa. Your reviewer criticizes White, with few exceptions, not for substance or style or anything else in the book. Rather the criticism is aimed at when the author came aboard. It's like the war in Vietnam where to have credentials in certain groups one must prove that he spoke out against it prior to such and such a date.

As a reader of *The New Republic* and Theodore White's set of books, I think that Mr. White has, with this last volume, returned to the high standard he set in 1960, has masterfully told the story of Watergate in its entirety, and has been guilty of doing it extremely well.

Richard M. Fellman
Omaha, Nebraska

Weighing the Risks

To the editors:

Frankly you made some mistakes in your nuclear power article ("Weighing the Risks," *TNR*, May 17) because you're outside looking in while some of us, men and women with minds and some scientific background, have been inside—and long before Nader who's a come-lately. What is occurring is a grassroots movement of which neither he nor anyone is the leader, involving millions of citizens. The Congress is *not* just waking up to the fact that nuclear power proliferation is dangerous, unreliable and costly, with the people perforce subsidizing it from the first and now being hit with "pass alongs" to cover the billions spent in so-called outrages—shutdowns due to persistent defects and accidents that are incredibly costly to repair because, as Louis Roddis of Con Ed told the Atomic Industrial Forum, men can work only a minute or two at a time due to the radioactive ambiance. During these outages power, of course, must be purchased.

Enough members of Congress were in opposition last year when the Price-Anderson Act, which lays most of the onus for nuclear damages on taxpayers, came up for renewal. Rep. Holifield, a chief of the nuclear Politburo, had to implore his colleagues not to kill Price-Anderson, tearfully and incoherently confiding that his daughter had cancer and was receiving radiation treatments—"this terrible force" he had helped to tame. According to *Nuclear News* the congressmen then voted more for the old man than the bill. As for Sen. Pastore, he had his troubles, too, entreating the senators with Latin fervor, "for God's sake, don't let's tip this over!" A trip-wire clause was inserted into the bill, which caused the President not to sign it.

There is a *New Republic* article in the proper role of the public in decision-making given this age of overwhelming technology—for one example, the effort to stave off a plutonium economy or to restrain it before it grows beyond control. This is too serious for ironical sophisticated treatment, if you'll forgive me for being such a peasant.

Elise Jerard, Ph.D.
Chairman, Independent Phi Beta Kappa Environmental Study Group

Democratic Death Wish

To the editors:

TRB says that Ford will likely be elected in '76. (*TNR*, June 28).

It seems to this unworthy one that all the Democrats need do is to remind the people who gave us Nixon, Agnew, Ehrlichman, Haldeman, Mitchell, Stans, Magruder, Colson, Liddy and of course Ford, to win big. Or is it true as is becoming apparent, the Democrats have a death wish?

John F. Weatherly
Auburndale, Massachusetts

Kauffmann, *from page 20*

woman (Woodward) he once had a fling with. She has a nympho teenage daughter. (Bed-busy adolescents are in, this season; see *Night Moves.*) (No! *Don't* see *Night Moves.)* There's a rich autocratic grandma, the good English actress Coral Browne, who gets bopped too soon to be interesting. There's a local detective chief played by Tony Franciosa, who has never been more negligible, which is some sort of summit. And there's the imitation-Chandler tycoon, played by Murray Hamilton who was the mayor in *Jaws* and is equally unimpressive here.

The laughably tenuous plot has its climactic scene in the tub room of an abandoned mental hospital. Hence the title. The whole script has labored toward that "hence."

Newman and Woodward have complained publicly about the scarcity of good scripts. But did they have to prove the point at this length?

Book Note. In the past few years Indiana University Press has been issuing a series of brief film guides, each about a well-known picture—for study purposes of course. A few of them have risen somewhat above the merely utilitarian. The best so far is the latest, No. 11, *Filmguide to 8 1/2*, written by Ted Perry with feeling and insight. ($6.95 cloth; $1.95 paper; 90 pp.) One of its dividends is a detailed description scene by scene. Very helpful because—shame to our presses—there is no published screenplay in English of this increasingly beautiful film.

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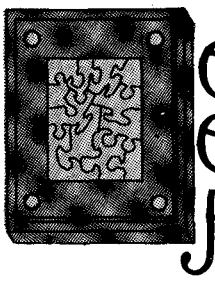

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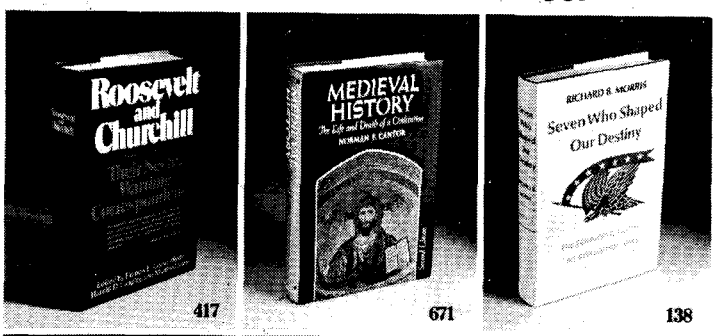

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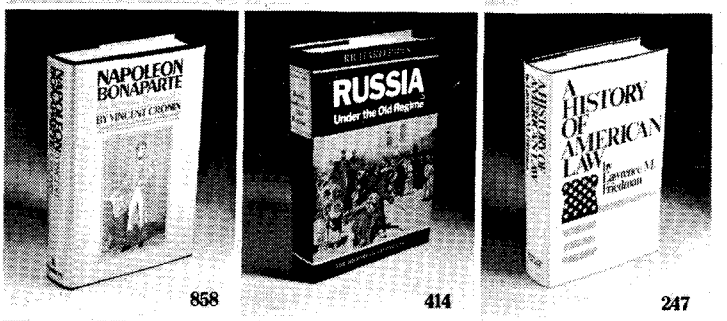

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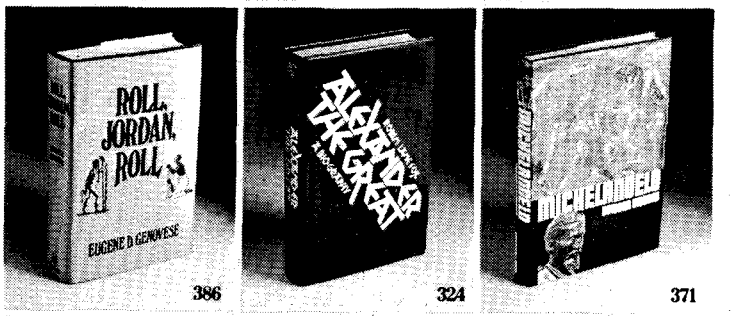

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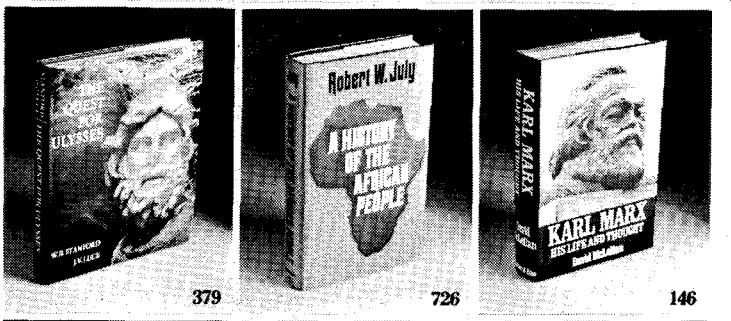

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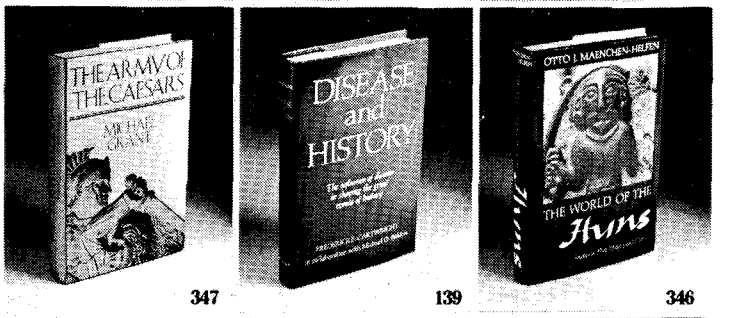

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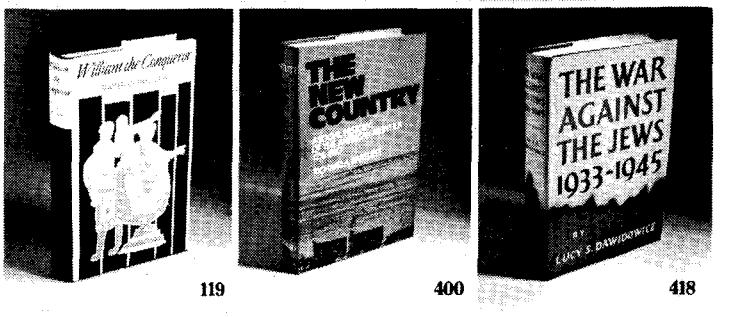

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